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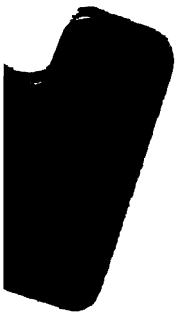

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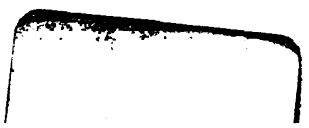

THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

IX.

NUMA ROUMESTAN

ROSE AND NINETTE

VOL. I.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

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THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

NUMA ROUMESTAN

TO WHICH IS ADDED

ROSE AND NINETTE

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

ILLUSTRATED BY ADRIEN MOREAU

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION.

IN this novel Alphonse Daudet has expressed some of his most cherished opinions regarding his own country people. To perfect it he exerted himself to the highest pitch of industry. As one of his studies in Parisian manners and customs, it will remain a document from which a period in French history can be reconstructed hereafter. Comedy and broad farce, tragedy and pathos, alternate in its chapters, while its dramatic possibilities have been exploited for the stage.

Over "Numa Roumestan" the genius of Alphonse Daudet plays as clearly as over any of his novels. Its construction is simpler than "Jack" and it moves with greater ease; its characters are racier and more varied than those of "Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné." It affords the quintessence of Daudet's best, of his naturalness and descriptive powers, and shows an unrivalled use of materials carefully collected in Paris and Provence. The southern parts of France, the landscape and inhabitants, are described with a master hand, but its finest effects of contrast are reserved for those expatriated Southrons who have

Paris for a background — whether they are law students who herd together at the Café Malmus, or worthy shopkeepers from Nîmes who sell the products of the South to their fellow-Southerners under such cloudy canopies as hang above the Seine and the Oise.

The conflict of political ideas and social forms between the North and South was brought to a head during and after the struggle between Germany and France. The novel moves within the period 1870 to 1876. The situation was suggested by the hard feeling engendered of the lukewarmness of the South in coming to the aid of the country when invaded by Moltke's armies. But Daudet does not encumber the movement of his story with politics; never once does he refer directly to the war or the siege of Paris; he merely uses the situation in order better to depict the opposites in southern and northern character. And it must be conceded that, much as he relishes the outsides of men and things in Provence, he attacks the southern character, as only one who is born to a knowledge of its failings can. Bompard is Tartarin de Tarascon viewed through another facet. Aunt Portal, however, who is drawn from a relative of the Daudets, and the keeper of the Café Malmus; Baron de Lappara and the Bachellery girl; but first and foremost Roumestan himself, seem characters in whom a great bitterness of the author toward his old home comes to expression. Nevertheless this bitterness had its origin in affec-

tion; it is the scolding, if one may use so light a word, of a person who feels responsible for his own fellow-countrymen and exaggerates their faults in order to read them a lesson.

How admirable a creation Numa Roumestan is may be measured by the fact that his character fits American politicians, allowance being made for certain superficial traits that do not belong to men of our race. It is not merely in France that one can put the label "Numa" on a shifty but eloquent phrasemonger, ever ready to attempt the highest offices of State by the aid of promises and empty, booby-catching rhetoric. We also have great men like Numa, who confessed, with more frankness than we find in our own windy examples, that he could only think after he had begun to speak — men of note "upon whom time and reflection have the same effect as humidity upon phosphorus."

Numa is not an ordinary villain but a kindly soul, not without occasional gleams of humor and the ability to see the faults of his own temperament, but he includes a strain of Oriental paganism which makes it impossible for him to be faithful, especially in love. While Rosalie is no blue-stocking and not really cold, yet she has self-respect, is intellectual, reserved and proud. Apart from the theme of North and South discussed in this couple we have the wider theme, applicable to all mankind, of the active, fleshly temperament attracted by, yet inevitably at war with, the passive intel-

lectual partner in life. Numa would have been more at ease, perhaps happier, had he taken a Provençal wife who would have lain in wait for his infidelities and made his life miserable at the slightest sign of disaffection. He needed a partner as childlike if not as vulgar as himself. Rosalie was too fine for his nature.

Much light is thrown indirectly on "Numa Roumestan" by the memoir of M. Léon Daudet on his father recently translated for this series. There we find Alphonse Daudet talking about his compatriots in this fashion: "A morality as loose as one's belt. Streams of faults, talk as facile as their impulse and their promises, yes, as their mendacity! . . . Alas, for the lofty comedies! What breasts smitten by the hand, what low, moved voices, hoarse but captivating, what easy tears are theirs! what adjurations and calls upon patriotism and lofty sentiments!" And speaking of the sobriety of the Southern French in the matter of stimulants he says in "Numa Roumestan" that the South needs no wine, for it feels itself intoxicated from birth — "drunk without drinking." Again he remarked to his son: "The sun transformed into heat and movement, furious and irresistible, glides into the veins of the Southerners. Though it may intoxicate and turn their heads, it never attacks their intelligence, which on the contrary it renders stronger, deeper and more lucid." And again, singing the praise of heat: "Heat brings our temperaments to flowering, fruit and

burgeoning. It gives to the human being his own particular perfume and to sentiments their vehemence. When accumulated in an individual and in a race, it acts like a subtle kind of alcohol or like some delicate opium; it transfigures and renders divine."

Such remarks bring back to the translator similar statements that Alphonse Daudet once made to him in Paris regarding a mysterious influence exerted upon his nerves to the detriment of his health by this same sun of the South. The conversation took place many years before that illness was developed which carried him off. Perhaps the following, reported by his son, may bear upon this fancy of his:

"These sensations have to be paid for later. We, the transplanted ones, are seized upon by this homicidal North with its mists and rheumatism, its mournful rains and sleet. Wet outside, we are burning within, and are the prey of a twofold nature. Then our impressions become more tender. The North is difficult on the question of the choice of words, their value and their place in the sentence, much more so than the lazy, voluptuous South."

"Numa Roumestan" is in so far forth a *Tendenz-Novelle*, as it is to a great extent occupied with the vice of mendacity in the South; Numa is the typical liar. The sun breeds lively nerves and proneness to make promises and exaggerate; the result of kindliness, imaginativeness and laziness is untruthfulness. His son tells us: "A subject

for discussion that never ran dry was the problem of lying. 'Is it fair to treat a man as a liar,' argued Daudet, 'who becomes drunk with his own speech, and, without any low purpose, without the instinct of deceiving or getting the better of his neighbor, or of profit, endeavors to embellish his own life and that of others with stories which he knows are untrue but which he would like to have true, or at any rate probable? Is Don Quixote a liar? And all those poets who wish to take us away from the actual and compass the globe in their wandering flights— are they liars?'"

Daudet makes this defence for his fellow-countrymen; but a more striking if less natural specimen of a liar of this sort than Numa Roumestan is Bompard, while M. Rostand has added another to the list in his Gascon hero Cyrano de Bergerac.

The consistency of the plot of "Numa Roumestan" is notable in this point: Numa comes within an ace of losing his wife and Ministry through the vengeance of a girl, the sister of the tabor-player, the musician he has lured to Paris through his mania for making promises which he does not dream of fulfilling. Enraged at his failure to provide a place for her brother, she sends the anonymous letter that brings on the catastrophe. It is like the mouse that means disaster to the elephant; it is like the reasoning of the primitive peoples who, as we are beginning to discover, recognizing just such petty origins for wide calamities, worshipped and raised temples to the grasshopper,

and to noxious insects still more minute, under the names of Beelzebub or Herakles the queller of the Vine-fly.

A word as to the translation. Owing to his desire for actuality and liveliness of style, Alphonse Daudet uses many expressions that are slang or hover near the border of slang, yet are used by people of the best education in colloquial discourse, but are not permitted in serious literature. In addition to these terms there is the host of dialectic words that give the local color of the South. Translated into English or American slang, or expressions that are supposed to be unuttered in polite society, these words come with an unpleasant coarseness. But without them the reader would fail to realize the original, for slang is as common among all but priggish French people as with us — perhaps among Parisians commoner. Again, Daudet's style is often condensed; he often swings off into descriptive passages where strict ideas as to grammar and the proportion of sentences are lost and the purists and grammarians are offended. These intentional violations of strict rules cannot be ignored, nor can they be pedantically corrected by the translator, for therein is reflected the nervous concentration of the author; these passages are redolent of Daudet's peculiar individuality. It may be remembered that at first he found little favor with the Institute and that later, when the Institute no longer had anything to offer him, Daudet refused to take the necessary

steps toward an election which in all probability was within his grasp: the author of "L'Immortel" was not elected to the Immortals.

Daudet followed Flaubert and the Goncourts in repeating the idioms and slang of the people as they talk when at their ease; therein he followed his own beliefs in regard to naturalism, as may be read in his own words in the memoir by his son.

In "Rose and Ninette," which appears along with "Numa Roumestan" in the second volume, there is much less unconventional talk, except in the scenes with the card-playing little baron. The story is very original yet very natural, and turns on the evil which is wrought through women whose slanderous tongues are set in motion by natures that hover just outside the lunatic asylum — women responsible for their acts, but vicious to a point where just a little more venom will land them in prison or the madhouse.

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Photogravured by Goupil & Co., Paris, from Drawings by Adrien Moreau.

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NUMA ROUMESTAN.

CHAPTER I.

TO THE ARENA!

THAT Sunday — it was a scorching hot Sunday in July at the time of the yearly competitions for the department — there was a great open-air festival held in the ancient amphitheatre of Aps in Provence. All the town was there — the weavers from the New Road, the aristocrats of the Calade quarter, and some people even came all the way from Beaucaire.

"Fifty thousand persons at the lowest estimate," said the *Forum* in its account the next day; but then we must allow for Provençal puffing.

The truth was that an enormous crowd was crushed together upon the sun-baked stone benches of the old amphitheatre, just as in the palmy days of the Antonines, and it was evident that the meet of the Society of Agriculture was far from being the main attraction to this overflow of the folk. Something more than the Landes horse-races was needed, or the prize-fights for men and "half men," the athletic games of "strangle the cat" and "jump the swineskin," or the contests

for fifers and tabor-players, as old a story to the townspeople as the ancient red stones of the Arena; something more was needed to keep this multitude standing for two hours under that blinding, murderous sun, upon those burning flags, breathing in an atmosphere of flame and dust flavored with gunpowder, risking blindness, sunstroke, fevers and all the other dangers and tortures attendant on what is called down there in Provence an open-air festival.

The grand attraction of the annual competitions was Numa Roumestan.

Ah, well; the proverb "No man is a prophet" etc. is certainly true when applied to painters and poets, whose fellow-countrymen in fact are always the last to acknowledge their claims to superiority for whatever is ideal and lacking in tangible results; but it does not apply to statesmen, to political or industrial celebrities, those mighty advertised fames whose currency consists of favors and influence, fames that reflect their glory on city and townsmen in the form of benefits of every sort and kind.

For the last ten years Numa, the great Numa, leader and Deputy representing all the professions, has been the prophet of Provence; for ten years the town of Aps has shown toward her illustrious son the tender care and effusiveness of a mother, one of those mothers of the South quick in her expressions, lively in her exclamations and gesticulatory caresses.

When he comes each summer during the vaca-

tion of the Chamber of Deputies, the ovation begins as soon as he appears at the station! There are the Orpheons swelling out their embroidered banners as they intone their heroic choral songs. The railway porters are in waiting, seated on the steps until the ancient family coach which always comes for the "leader" has made a few turns of its big wheels down the alley of big plane-trees on the Avenue Berchère; then they take the horses out and put themselves into the shafts and draw the great man with their own hands, amid the shouts of the populace and the waving of hats, as far as the Portal mansion, where he gets out. This enthusiasm has so completely passed into the stage of tradition in the rites of his arrival that the horses now stop of themselves, like a team in a post-chaise, at the exact corner where they are accustomed to be taken out by the porters; no amount of beating could induce them to go a step farther.

From the first day the whole city has changed its appearance. Here is no longer that melancholy palace of the prefect where long siestas are lulled by the strident note of the locusts in the parched trees on the Cours. Even in the hottest part of the day the esplanade is alive and the streets are filled with hurrying people arrayed in solemn black suits and hats of ceremony, all sharply defined in the brilliant sunlight, the shadows of their epileptic gestures cut in black against the white walls.

The carriages of the Bishop and the President shake the highroad; then delegations arrive from

the aristocratic Faubourg where Roumestan is adored because of his royalist convictions; next deputations from the women warpers march in bands the width of the street, their heads held high under their Arlesian caps.

The inns overflow with the country people, farmers from the Camargue or the Crau, whose unhitched wagons crowd the small squares and streets as on a market day. In the evening the cafés crowded with people remain open well on into the night, and the windows of the club of the "Whites," lighted up until an impossible hour, vibrate with the peals of a voice that belongs to the popular god.

Not a prophet in his own country? 'T was only necessary to look at the Arena under the intense blue sky of that Sunday of July 1875, note the indifference of the crowd to the games going on in the circus below, and all the faces turned in the same direction, toward the municipal platform, where Roumestan was seated surrounded by braided coats and sunshades for festivals and gay dresses of many-colored silks. 'T was only necessary to listen to the talk and cries of ecstasy and the simple words of admiration coming in loud voices from this good people of Aps, some expressed in Provençal and some in a barbarous kind of French well rubbed with garlic, but all uttered with an accent as implacable as is the sun down there, an accent which cuts out and gives its own to every syllable and will not so much as spare us the dot over an "i."

"*Diou! qu'es bèou!* God! how beautiful he is!"

"He is a bit stouter than he was last year."

"That makes him look all the more imposing."

"Don't push so! there is room for everybody!"

"Look at him, my son; there's our Numa. When you are grown up you can say that you have seen him, *qué!*"

"His Bourbon nose is all there! and not one of his teeth missing!"

"Not a single gray hair, either!"

"*Té*, I should say not! he is not so very old yet. He was born in '32 — the year that Louis Philippe pulled down the mission crosses, *pecaïré!*"

"That scoundrel of a Philippe!"

"They scarcely show, those forty-three years of his."

"Sure enough, they certainly don't. . . . *Té!* here, great star —"

And with a bold gesture a big girl with burning eyes throws a kiss toward him from afar that resounds through the air like the cry of a bird.

"Take care, Zette — suppose his wife should see you."

"The one in blue, is that his wife?"

No, the lady in blue was his sister-in-law, Mlle. Hortense, a pretty girl just out of the convent, but one, they say, who already straddled a horse just as well as a dragoon. Mme. Roumestan was more dignified, more thoroughbred in appearance, but she looked much haughtier. These Parisian ladies think so much of themselves! And so, with the picturesque impudence of their half-Latin language, the

women, standing and shading their eyes with their hands, proceeded in loud voices deliberately to pick the two Parisians to pieces—their simple little travelling hats, their close-fitting dresses worn without jewelry, which were so great a contrast to the local toilettes, in which gold chains and red and green skirts puffed out by enormous bustles prevailed.

The men talked of the services rendered by Numa to the good cause, of his letter to the Emperor, and his speeches for the White Flag. Oh, if we had only a dozen men in the Chamber like him, Henry V would have been on his throne long ago!

Intoxicated by this circumambient enthusiasm and wrought up by these remarks, Numa could not remain quiet in one spot. He threw himself back in his great arm-chair, his eyes shut, his expression ecstatic, and swayed himself restlessly back and forth; then, rising, he strode up and down the platform and leaned over toward the arena to breathe in as it were all the light and cries, and then returned to his seat. Jovial and unceremonious, his necktie loose, he knelt on his chair, his back and his boot-soles turned to the crowd, and conversed with his Paris ladies seated above and behind him, trying to inoculate them with his own joy and satisfaction.

Mme. Roumestan was bored — that was evident from the expression of abstracted indifference on her face, which though beautiful in lines seemed cold and a little haughty when not enlivened by the light of two gray eyes, two eyes like pearls,

true Parisian eyes, and by the dazzling effect of the smile on her slightly open mouth.

All this southern gayety, made up of turbulence and familiarity, and this wordy race all on the outside and the surface, whose nature was so much the opposite of her own, which was serious and self-contained, grated on her perhaps unconsciously, because she saw in them multiplied and vulgarized the same type as that of the man at whose side she had lived ten years, whom she had learned to know to her cost. The glaring hot blue sky, so excessively brilliant and vibrating with heat, was also not to her liking. How could these people breathe? Where did they find breath enough to shout so? She took it into her head to speak her thought aloud, how delightful a nice gray misty sky of Paris would be, and how a fresh spring shower would cool the pavements and make them glisten!

"Oh, Rosalie, how can you talk so!"

Her husband and sister were quite indignant, especially her sister, a tall young girl in the full bloom of youth and health, who, the better to see everything, was making herself as tall as possible. It was her first visit to Provence, and yet one might have thought that these shouts and gestures beneath the burning Italian sky had stirred within her some secret fibre, some dormant instinct, her southern origin, in fact, which was revealed in the heavy eyebrows meeting over her houri-like eyes, and her pale complexion, on which the fierce summer sun left not one red mark.

"Do, please, Rosalie!" pleaded Roumestan, who was determined to persuade his wife. "Get up and look at that. Did Paris ever show you anything like that?"

In the vast theatre widening into an ellipse that made a great jag in the blue sky, thousands of faces were packed together on the many rows of benches rising in terraces; bright eyes made luminous points, while bright colored and picturesque costumes spangled the whole mass with butterfly tints. Thence, as from a huge caldron, rose a chorus of joyous shouts, the ringing of voices and the blare of trumpets volatilized, as it were, by the intense light of the sun. Hardly audible on the lower stories, where dust, sand and human breath formed a floating cloud, this din grew louder as it rose and became more distinct and unveiled itself in the purer air. Above all rang out the cry of the milk-roll venders, who bore from tier to tier their baskets draped with white linen: "*Li pan ou la, li pan ou la!*" (Here's your milk bread, here's your milk bread!) The sellers of drinking-water, cleverly balancing their green glazed pitchers, made one thirsty just to hear them cry: "*L'aigo es fresco! Quau voù beùre?*" (The water's fresh! Who will drink?)

Up on the highest brim of the amphitheatre, high up, groups of children playing and running noisily added a crown of sharp calls to the mass of noise below, much like a flock of martins soaring high above the other birds.

And over all of it, how wonderful was the play

of light and shadow, as with the advance of day the sun turned slowly in the hollow of the vast amphitheatre as it might on the disk of a sun-dial, driving the crowd along, and grouping it in the zone of shade, leaving empty those parts of the vast structure exposed to a terrible heat — broad stretches of red flags fringed with dry grass where successive conflagrations have left their mark in black.

At times a stone would detach itself in the topmost tier of the ancient monument, and, rolling down from story to story, cause cries of terror and much crowding among the people below, as if the whole edifice were about to crumble; then on the tiers there was a movement like the assault of a raging sea on the dunes, for with this exuberant race the effect of a thing never has any relation to its cause, enlarged as it is by dreams and perceptions that lack all sense of proportion.

Thus peopled and thus animated once more, the ancient ruin seemed to live again, and no longer retain its appearance of a showplace for tourists. Looking thereon, it gave one the sensation of a poem by Pindar recited by a modern Greek, which means a dead language come to life again, having lost its cold scholarly look. The clear sky, the sun like silver turned to vapor, these Latin intonations still preserved in the Provençal idiom, and here and there, particularly in the cheap seats, the poses of the people in the opening of a vaulted passage — motionless attitudes made antique and almost sculptural by the vibration of the air, local

types, profiles standing out like those on ancient coins, with the short aquiline nose, broad shaven cheeks and upturned chin that Numa showed; all this filled out the idea of a Roman festival — even to the lowing of the cows from the Landes which echoed through the vaults below — those vaults whence in olden days lions and elephants were wont to issue to the combat. Thus, when the great black hole of the *podium*, closed by a grating, stood open to the arena all empty and yellow with sand, one almost expected to see wild beasts spring out instead of the peaceful bucolic procession of men and of the animals that had received prizes in the competitions.

At the moment it was the turn of the mules led along in harness, sumptuously arrayed in rich Provençal trappings, carrying proudly their slender little heads adorned with silver bells, rosettes, ribbons and feathers, not in the least alarmed at the fierce cracking of whips clear and sharply cut, swung serpent-like or in volleys by the muleteers, each one standing up full length upon his beast. In the crowd each village recognized its champions and named each one aloud:

"There's Cavaillon! There's Maussane!"

The long, richly-colored file rolled its slow length around the arena to the sound of musical bells and jingling, glittering harness, and stopped before the municipal platform and saluted Numa with a serenade of whip-crackings and bells; then passed along on its circular course under the leadership of a fine-looking horseman in white tights and

high top-boots, one of the gentlemen of the local club who had planned the function and quite unconsciously had struck a false note in its harmony, mixing provincialism with Provençal things and thus giving to this curious local festival a vague flavor of a procession of riders at Franconi's circus. However, apart from a few country people, no one paid much attention to him. No one had eyes for anything but the grand stand, crowded just then with persons who wished to shake hands with Numa — friends, clients, old college chums, who were proud of their relations with the great man and wished all the world to see them conversing with him and proposed to show themselves there on the benches, well in sight.

Flood of visitors succeeded flood without a break. There were old men and young men, country gentlemen dressed all in gray from their gaiters to their little hats, managers of shops in their best clothes creased from much lying away in presses, *ménagers* or farmers from the district of Aps in their round jackets, a pilot from Port St. Louis twirling his big prisoner's cap in his hands — all bearing their "South" stamped upon their faces, whether covered to the eyes with those purple-black beards which the Oriental pallor of their complexion accentuates, or closely shaven after the ancient French fashion, short-necked ruddy people sweating like terra cotta water coolers; all of them with flaming black eyes sticking well out from the face, gesticulating in a familiar way and calling each other "thee" and "thou"!

And how Roumestan did receive them, without distinction of birth or class or fortune, all with the same unquenchable effusiveness! It was: "*Té*, Monsieur d'Espalion! and how are you, Marquis?" "*Hé bé!* old Cabantous, how goes the piloting?" "Delighted to see you, President Bédarride!"

Then came shaking of hands, embraces, solid taps on the shoulder that give double value to words spoken, which are always too cold for the intense feeling of the Provençal. To be sure, the conversations were of short duration. Their "leader" gave but a divided attention, and as he chatted he waved how-d'ye-do with his hand to the new-comers. But nobody resented this unceremonious way of dismissing people with a few kind words: "Yes, yes, I won't forget — send in your claim — I will take it with me."

There were promises of government tobacco shops and collectors' offices; what they did not ask for he seemed to divine; he encouraged timid ambitions and provoked them with kindly words:

"What, no medal yet, my old Cabantous, after you have saved twenty lives? Send me your papers. They adore me at the Navy Department. We must repair this injustice."

His voice rang out warm and metallic, stamping and separating each word. One would have said that each one was a gold piece rolling out fresh from the mint. And every one went away delighted with this shining coin, leaving the platform with the beaming look of the pupil who has been awarded

a prize. The most wonderful thing about this devil of a man was his prodigious suppleness in assuming the air and manner of the person to whom he was speaking, and perfectly naturally, too, apparently in the most unconscious way in the world.

With President Bédarride he was unctuous, smooth in gestures, his mouth fixed affectedly and his arm stretched forth in a magisterial fashion as if he were tossing aside his lawyer's toga before the judge's seat. When talking to Colonel Rochemaure he assumed a soldierly bearing, his hat slapped on one side; while with Cabantous he thrust his hands into his pockets, bowed his legs and rolled his shoulders as he walked, just like an old sea-dog. From time to time, between two embraces as it were, he turned to his Parisian guests, beaming and wiping his steaming brow.

"But, my dear Numa!" cried Hortense in a low voice with her pretty laugh, "where will you find all these tobacco shops you have been promising them?"

Roumestan bent his large head with its crop of close curling hair slightly thinned at the top and whispered: "They are promised, little sister, not given."

And, fancying a reproach in his wife's silence, he added:

"Do not forget that we are in Provence, where we understand each other's language. All these good fellows understand what a promise is worth. They don't expect to get the shops any more positively than I count on giving them. But they

chatter about them — which amuses them — and their imaginations are at work: why deprive them of that pleasure? Besides, you must know that among us Southerners words have only a relative meaning. It is merely putting things in their proper focus." The phrase seemed to please him, for he repeated several times the final words, "in their proper focus — in their proper focus — "

"I like these people," said Hortense, who really seemed to be amusing herself immensely; but Rosalie was not to be convinced. "Still, words do signify something," she murmured very seriously, as if communing with her own soul.

"My dear, it is a simple question of latitude." Roumestan accompanied his paradox with a jerk of the shoulder peculiar to him, like that of a peddler putting up his pack. The great orator of the aristocracy retained several personal tricks of this kind, of which he had never been able to break himself — tricks that might have caused him in another political party to seem a representative of the common folk; but it was a proof of power and of singular originality in those aristocratic heights where he sat enthroned between the Prince of Anhalt and the Duc de la Rochetaillade. The Faubourg St. Germain went wild over this shoulder-jerk coming from the broad stalwart back that carried the hopes of the French monarchy.

If Mme. Roumestan had ever shared the illusions of the Faubourg she did so no longer, judging from her look of disenchantment and the little smile with which she listened to her husband's

words, a smile paler with melancholy than with disdain. But he left them suddenly, attracted by the sound of some peculiar music that came to them from the arena below. The crowd in great excitement was on its feet shouting "Valmajour! Valmajour!"

Having taken the musicians' prize the day before, the famous Valmajour, the greatest taborist of Provence, had come to honor Numa with his finest airs. In truth he was a handsome youth, this same Valmajour, as he stood in the centre of the arena, his coat of yellow wool hanging from one shoulder and a scarlet belt standing out against the white linen of his shirt. Suspended from his left arm he carried his long light tabor by a strap and with his left hand held a small fife to his lips, while with his right hand and his right leg held forward he played on his tabor with a brave and gallant air. The fife, though but small, filled the whole place like a chorus of locusts; appropriate music in this limpid crystalline atmosphere in which all sounds vibrate, while the deep notes of the tabor supported this peculiar singing and its many variations.

The sound of the wild, sharp music brought back his childhood to Numa more vividly than anything else that he had seen that day; he saw himself a little Provence boy running about to country fairs, dancing under the leafy shadow of the plane-trees, on village squares, in the white dust of the highroads, or over the lavender flowers of sun-parched hillsides. A delicious emotion passed

through his eyes, for, notwithstanding his forty years and the parching effects of political life, he still retained a good portion of imagination, thanks to the kindliness of nature, a surface-sensibility that is so deceptive to those who do not know the true bottom of a man's character.

And besides, Valmajour was not an everyday taborist, one of those common minstrels who pick up music-hall catches and odds and ends of music at country fairs, degrading their instrument by trying to cater to modern taste. Son and grandson of taborists, he played only the songs of his native land, songs crooned during night watches over cradles by grandmothers; and these he did know; he never wearied of them. After playing some of Saboly's rhythmical Christmas carols arranged as minuets and quadrilles, he started the "March of the Kings," to the tune of which, during the grand epoch, Turenne conquered and burned the Palatinate. Along the benches where but a moment before one heard the humming of popular airs like the swarming of bees, the delighted crowd began keeping time with their arms and heads, following the splendid rhythm which surged along through the grand silences of the theatre like mistral, that mighty wind; silences only broken by the mad twittering of swallows that flew about hither and thither in the bluish green vault above, disquieted, and as it were crazy, as if trying to discover what unseen bird it was that gave forth these wonderfully high and sharp notes.

When Valmajour had finished, wild shouts of

applause burst forth. Hats and handkerchiefs flew into the air. Numa called the musician up to the platform, and throwing his arms around his neck exclaimed: "You have made me weep, my boy." And he showed his big golden-brown eyes all swimming in tears.

Very proud to find himself in such exalted company, among embroidered coats and the mother-of-pearl handles of official swords, the musician accepted these praises and embraces without any great embarrassment. He was a good-looking fellow with a well shaped head, broad forehead, beard and moustache of lustrous black against a swarthy skin, one of those proud peasants from the valley of the Rhône who have none of the artful humility of the peasants of central France.

Hortense had noticed at once how delicately formed were his hands under their covering of sunburn. She examined the tabor with its ivory-tipped drum-stick and was astonished at the lightness of the old instrument, which had been in his family for two hundred years, and whose case curiously carved in walnut wood, decked with light carvings, polished, thin and sonorous, seemed to have grown pliable under the patina time had lent it. They admired above all the little old fife, that simple rustic flute with three stops only, such as the ancient taborists used, to which Valmajour had returned out of respect for tradition and the management of which he had conquered after infinite pains and patience. Nothing more touching than to hear the little tale of his struggles and victory in an odd sort of French.

"It come to me in the night," he said, "as I listened me to the nightingawles. Thought I in meself — look there, Valmajour, there's a little birrd o' God whose throat alone is equal to all the trills. Now, what he can do with one stop, can't you accomplish with the three holes in your little flute?"

He talked quietly, with a perfectly confident tone of voice, without a suspicion of being ridiculous. No one indeed would have dared to smile in the face of Numa's enthusiasm, for he was throwing up his arms and stamping so that he almost went through the platform. "How handsome he is! What an artist!" And after him the Mayor and President Bédarride and the General and M. Roumavage, the big brewer from Beaucaire, vice-consul of Peru, tightly buttoned into a carnival costume all over silver, echoed the sentiments of the leader, repeating in convinced tones: "What a great artist!"

Hortense agreed with them, and in her usual impulsive manner expressed her sentiments: "Oh, yes, a great artist indeed" while Mme. Roumestan murmured "You will turn his head, poor fellow."

But there seemed to be no fear of this for Valmajour, to judge by his tranquil air; he was not even in the least excited on hearing Numa suddenly exclaim:

"Come to Paris, my boy, your fortune is assured!"

"Oh, my sister never would let me go," he explained with a quiet smile.

His mother was dead and he lived with his father and sister on a farm that bore the family name some three leagues distant from Aps on the Cordova mountain. Numa swore he would go to see him before he returned to Paris; he would talk to his relations — he was sure to make it a go.

"And I will help you, Numa," said a girlish voice behind him.

Valmajour bowed without speaking, turned on his heel and walked down the broad carpet of the platform, his tabor under his arm, his head held high and in his gait that light, swaying motion of the hips common to the Provençal, a lover of dancing and rhythm. Down below his comrades were waiting for him and shook him by the hand.

Suddenly a cry arose, "The farandole, the farandole," a shout without end doubled by the echoes of the stone passages and corridors from which the shadows and freshness seemed to come which were now invading the arena and ever diminishing the zone of sunlight. In a moment the arena was crowded, crammed to suffocation with merry dancers, a regular village crowd of girls in white neckscarfs and bright dresses, velvet ribbons nodding on lace caps, and of men in braided blouses and colored waistcoats.

At the signal from the tabor that mob fell into line and filed off in bands, holding each other's hands, their legs all eager for the steps. A prolonged trill from the fife made the whole circus undulate, and led by a man from Barbantane, a

district famous for its dancers, the farandole slowly began its march, unwinding its rings, executing its figures almost on one spot, filling with its confused noise of rustling garments and heavy breathing the huge vaulted passage of the outlet in which, bit by bit, it was swallowed up.

Valmajour followed them with even steps, solemnly, managing his long tabor with his knee, while he played louder and louder upon the fife, as the closely packed crowd in the arena, already plunged in the bluish gray of the twilight, unwound itself like a bobbin filled with silk and gold thread.

"Look up there!" said Roumestan all of a sudden.

It was the head of the line of dancers pouring in through the arches of the second tier, while the musician and the last line of dancers were still stepping about in the arena. As it proceeded the farandole took up in its folds everybody whom the rhythm forced to join in the dance. What Provençal could have resisted the magic flute of Valmajour? Upborne and shot forward by the rebounding undernote of the tabor, his music seemed to be playing on every tier at the same time, passing the gratings and the open donjons, overtopping the cries of the crowd. So the farandole climbed higher and higher, and reached at last the uppermost tier, where the sun was yet glowing with a tawny light. The outlines of the long procession of dancers, bounding in their solemn dance, etched themselves against the high

panelled bays of the upper tier in the hot vibration of that July afternoon, like a row of fine silhouettes or a series of bas-reliefs in antique stone on the sculptured pediment of some ruined temple.

Down below on the deserted platform — for people were beginning to leave and the lower tiers were empty — Numa said to his wife as he wrapped a lace shawl about her to protect her from the evening chill:

"Now, really, is it not beautiful?"

"Very beautiful," answered the Parisian, moved this time to the depths of her artistic nature.

And the great man of Aps seemed prouder of this simple word of approbation than of all the noisy homage with which he had been surfeited for the last two hours.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEAMY SIDE OF A GREAT MAN.

NUMA ROUMESTAN was twenty-two years old when he came to Paris to complete the law studies which he had begun at Aix. At that time he was a good enough kind of a fellow, light-hearted, boisterous, full-blooded, with big, handsome, prominent eyes of a golden-brown color and somewhat frog-like, and a heavy mop of naturally curling hair which grew low on his forehead like a woollen cap without a visor. There was not the shadow of an idea, not the ghost of an ambition beneath that encroaching thatch of his. He was a typical Aix student, a good billiard and card player, without a rival in his capacity for drinking champagne and "going on the cat-hunt with torches" until three o'clock in the morning through the wide streets of the old aristocratic and Parliamentary town. But he was interested in absolutely nothing. He never read a book nor even a newspaper, and was deep in the mire of that provincial folly which shrugs its shoulders at everything and hides its ignorance under a pretence of plain common-sense.

Arrived in Paris, the Quartier Latin woke him up a little, although there was small reason for it. Like all his compatriots Numa installed himself

as soon as he arrived at the Café Malmus, a tall and noisy barrack of a place with three stories of tall windows, as high as those in a department shop, on the corner of the Rue Four Saint Germain. It filled the street with the noise of billiard playing and the vociferations of its clients, a regular horde of savages. The entire South of France loomed and spread itself there; every shade of it! Specimens of the southern French Gascon, the Provençal, the Bordeaux man, the Toulousian and Marseilles man, samples of the Auvergnat and Perigordian Southerner, him of Ariège, of the Ardèche and the Pyrenees, all with names ending in "as," "us" and "ac," resounding, sonorous and barbarous, such as Etcheverry, Terminarias, Bentaboulech, Laboulbène — names that sounded as if hurled from the mouth of a blunderbuss or exploded as from a powder mine, so fierce were the ejaculations. And what shouts and wasted breath merely to call for a cup of coffee; what resounding laughter, like the noise of a load of stones shunted from a cart; what gigantic beards, too stiff, too black, with a bluish tinge, beards that defied the razor, growing up into the eyes and joining on to the eyebrows, sprouted in little tufts in the broad equine nostrils and ears, but never able utterly to conceal the youth and innocence of these good honest faces hidden beneath such tropical growths.

When not at their lectures, which they attended conscientiously, these students passed their entire time at Malmus's, falling naturally into groups

according to their provinces or even their parishes, seated around the same old tables handed down to them by tradition, which might have retained the twang of their patois in the echoes of their marble tops, just as the desks of school-rooms retain the initials carved on them by school-boys.

Women in that company were few and far between, scarcely two or three to a story, poor girls whom their lovers brought there in a shamefaced way only to pass an evening beside them behind a glass of beer, looking over the illustrated papers, silent and feeling very out of place among these Southern youths who had been bought up to despise *lou fémélan* — females. Mistresses? *Té!* By Jove, they knew where to get them whenever they wanted them for an hour or a night; but never for long. Bullier's ball and the "howlers" did not tempt them, nor the late suppers of the *rôtisseuse.* They much preferred to stay at Malmus's, talk patois, and roll leisurely from the café to the schools and then to the table d'hôte.

If they ever crossed the Seine it was to go to the Théâtre Français to a performance of one of the old plays; for the Southerner always has the classic thing in his blood. They would go in a crowd, talking and laughing loudly in the street, though in reality feeling rather timid, and then return silent and subdued, their eyes dazed by the dust of the tragic scenes they had just witnessed, and with closed blinds and gas turned low would have another game before they went to bed.

Sometimes, on the occasion of the graduation

of one of their number, an impromptu feed would make the whole house redolent of garlic stews and mountain cheeses smelling strong and rotting nicely in their blue paper wrappers. After his farewell dinner the new owner of a sheepskin would take down from the rack the pipe that bore his initials and sally forth to be notary or deputy in some far-away hole beyond the Loire, there to talk to his friends in the provinces about Paris — Paris which he thought he knew, but in which really he had never set his foot!

In this narrow local circle Numa readily assumed the eagle's place. To begin with, he shouted louder than the others, and then his music was looked upon as a sign of superiority; at any rate there was some originality in his very lively taste for music. Two or three times a week he treated himself to a stall at the opera and when he came back he overflowed with recitatives and arias, which he sang quite agreeably in a pretty good throaty voice that rebelled against all cultivation. When he strode into the Café Malmus in a theatrical manner, singing some bit of Italian music as he passed the tables, peals of admiration welcomed him: "Hello, old artist!" the boys would shout from every gang. It was just like a club of ordinary citizens in this respect: owing to his reputation as a musical artist all the women gave him a warm look, but the men would use the term enviously and with a suggestion of irony. This artistic fame did him good service later when he came to power and entered public life. Even now the name of

Roumestan figures high on the list of all artistic commissions, plans for popular operas, reforms in exhibitions of paintings proposed in the Chamber of Deputies. All that was the result of evenings spent in haunting the music-halls. He learned there self-confidence, the actor's pose, and a certain way of taking up a position three-quarters front when talking to the lady at the cashier's desk; then his wonder-struck comrades would exclaim: "*Oh! de ce Numa, pas moins!*" (Oh, that Numa! what a fellow he is!)

In his studies he had the same easy victory; he was lazy and hated study and solitude, but he managed to pass his examination with no little success through sheer audacity and Southern slyness, the slyness which made him discover the weak spot in his professor's vanity and work it for all it was worth. Then his pleasant, frank expression and his amiability were also in his favor, and it seemed as if a lucky star lighted the pathway before him.

As soon as he obtained his lawyer's diploma his parents sent for him to return home, because the slender pocket money which he cost them meant privations they could no longer bear. But the prospect of burying himself alive in the old dead town of Aps crumbling to dust with its ancient ruins, an existence composed of a humdrum round of visits and nothing more exciting than a few lawsuits over a parcel of party-walls, held out no inducements to that undefined ambition that the southern youth vaguely felt underlying his love for the stir and intellectual life of Paris.

With great difficulty he obtained an extension of two years more, in which to complete his studies, and just as these two years had expired and the irrevocable summons home had come, at the house of the Duchesse de San Donnino he met Sagnier during a musical function to which he had been asked on account of his pretty voice — Sagnier, the great Sagnier, the Legitimist lawyer, brother of the duchess and a musical monomaniac. Numa's youthful enthusiasm appearing in the monotonous round of society and his craze for Mozart's music carried Sagnier off his feet. He offered him the position of fourth secretary in his office. The salary was merely nominal, but it was being admitted into the employment of the greatest law office in Paris, having close relations with the Faubourg Saint Germain and also with the Chamber of Deputies. Unluckily old Roumestan insisted on cutting off his allowance, hoping to force him to return when hunger stared him in the face. Was he not twenty-six, a notary, and fit to earn his own bread? Then it was that landlord Malmus came to the front.

A regular type was this Malmus; a large, pale-faced, asthmatic man, who from being a mere waiter had become the proprietor of one of the largest restaurants in Paris, partly by having credit, partly by usury. It had been his custom in early days to advance money to the students when they were in need of it, and then when their ships came in, allow himself to be repaid threefold. He could hardly read and could not write at all; his accounts

were kept by means of notches cut in a piece of wood, as he had seen the baker boys do in his native town of Lyon; but he was so accurate that he never made a mistake in his accounts, and, more than all, he never placed his money badly. Later, when he had become rich and the proprietor of the house in which he had been a servant for fifteen years, he established his business, and placed it entirely upon a credit basis, an unlimited credit that left the money-drawer empty at the close of the day but filled his queerly kept books with endless lines of orders for food and drink jotted down with those celebrated five-nibbed pens which are held in such sovereign honor in the world of Paris trade.

And the honest fellow's system was simplicity itself. A student kept all his pocket money, all his allowance from home. All had full credit for meals and drinks and favorites were even allowed a room in his house. He did not ask for a penny during term time, letting the interest mount up on very high sums. But he did not do this carelessly or without circumspection. Malmus passed two months every year, his vacation, in the provinces, making secret inquiry into the health and wealth of the families of his debtors. His asthma was terrible as he mounted the peaks of the Cévennes and descended the low ranges of Languedoc. He was to be seen, gouty and mysterious, prowling about among forgotten villages, with suspicious eyes lowering under the heavy lids that are peculiar to waiters in all-night restaurants. He would remain a few days in each place, interview the notary and

the sheriff, inspect secretly the farm or factory of his debtor's father, and then nothing was heard of him more.

What he learned at Aps gave him full confidence in Numa. The latter's father, formerly a weaver, had ruined himself with inventions and speculations and lived now in modest circumstances as an insurance agent, but his aunt, Mme. Portal, the childless widow of a rich town councillor, would doubtless leave all her property to her nephew; so, naturally, Malmus wished Numa to remain in Paris.

"Go into Sagnier's office; I will help you."

As a secretary of a man in Sagnier's position he could not live in the Quartier Latin, so Malmus furnished a set of bachelor chambers for him on the Quai Voltaire, on the courts, paying the rent and giving him his allowance on credit. Thus did the future leader face his destiny, everything on the surface seemingly easy and comfortable, but in reality in the direst need; lacking pin and pocket money. The friendship of Sagnier helped him to fine acquaintances. The Faubourg welcomed him. But this social success, the invitations in Paris and to country houses in summer, where he had to arrive in perfect fashionable outfit, only added to his expense. After repeated prayers his Aunt Portal helped him a little, but with great caution and stinginess, always accompanying her gifts with long flighty stupidities and Bible denunciations against "that ruinous Paris." The situation was untenable.

At the end of a year he looked for other employment. Besides, Sagnier required pioneers, regular navvies for hard work, and Roumestan was not that sort of man. The Provençal's indolence was ineradicable, and above all things he had a loathing for office work or any hard and continuous labor. The faculty of attention, which is nothing if not deep, was absolutely wanting to this volatile Southerner. That was because his imagination was too vivid, his ideas too jumbled-up beneath his dark brows, his mind too fickle, as even his writing showed; it was never twice the same. He was all on the surface, all voice, gestures, like a tenor at the opera.

"When I am not speaking I cannot think," he said naïvely, and it was true. Words with him never rushed forth propelled by the force of his thought; on the contrary, at the mechanical sound of his own words the thoughts formed themselves in advance. He was astonished and amused at chance meetings of words and ideas in his mind which had been lost in some corner of his memory, thoughts which speech would discover, pick up and marshal into arguments. Whilst he held forth he would suddenly discover emotions of which he had been unconscious; the vibrations of his own voice moved him to such a degree that there were certain intonations which touched his heart and affected him to tears. These were the qualities of an orator, to be sure, but he did not recognize them, as his duties at Sagnier's had hardly been such as to give him a chance to practise them.

Nevertheless, the year spent with the great Legitimist lawyer had a decisive effect upon his after life. He acquired convictions and a political party, the taste for politics and a longing for fortune and glory.

Glory came to him first.

A few months after he left his master, that title of "Secretary to Sagnier," which he clung to as an actor who has appeared once on the boards of the Comédie Française forever calls himself "of the Comédie Française," was the means of getting him his first case, the defence of a little Legitimist newspaper called "The Ferret," much patronized in the best society. His defence was cleverly and brilliantly made. Coming into court without the slightest preparation, his hands in his pockets, he talked for two hours with such an insolent "go" to him, and so much good-natured sarcasm, that the judges were forced to listen to him to the end. His dreadful southern accent, with its rolling "r's," which he had always been too indolent to correct, seemed to make his irony only bite the deeper. It had a power of its own, this eloquence with its very Southern swing, theatrical and yet familiar, but above all lucid and full of that broad light which is found in the works of people down South, as in their landscapes, limpid to their remotest parts.

Of course the paper was non-suited; Numa's success was paid for by costs and imprisonment. So from the ashes of many a play that has ruined manager and author one actor may snatch a repu-

tation. Old Sagnier, who had come to hear Numa plead, embraced his pupil before the assembled crowd. "Count yourself from this day on a great man, my dear Numa!" said he, and seemed surprised that he had hatched such a falcon's egg. But the most surprised man was Numa himself, as with the echo of his own words still sounding in his ears he descended the broad railless staircase of the Palais de Justice, quite stunned, as if in a dream.

After this success and this ovation, after showers of eulogistic letters and the jaundiced smiles of his brethren, the coming lawyer naturally felt he was indeed launched upon a triumphal career. He sat patiently waiting in his office looking out on the courtyard, before his scanty little fire; but nothing came save a few more invitations to dinner, and a pretty bronze from the foundry of Barbédienne, a donation from the staff of *Le Furet.*

The new great man found himself still facing the same difficulties, the same uncertain future. Oh! these professions called liberal, which cannot decoy and entrap their clients, how hard are their beginnings, before serious and paying customers come to sit in rows in their little rooms furnished on credit with dilapidated furniture and the symbolical clock on the chimney-piece flanked by tottering candelabra! Numa was driven to giving lessons in law among his Catholic and Legitimist acquaintances; but he considered work like this beneath the dignity of the man whose name had been so covered with glory by the party newspapers.

What mortified him most of all and made him feel his wretched plight was to be obliged to go and dine at Malmus's when he had no invitation elsewhere, and no money for a dinner at a fashionable restaurant. Nothing had changed at Malmus's; the same cashier's lady was enthroned among the punch-bowls as of old; the same pottery stove rumbled away near the old pipe-rack; the same shouts and accents, the same black beards from every section of the South prevailed; but his generation had passed, and he looked on the new generation with the disfavor which a man at maturity, but without a position, feels for the youths who make him seem old.

How could he have existed in so brainless a set? Surely the students of his day could not have been such fools! Even their admiration, their fawning round him like a lot of good-natured dogs, was insupportable to him.

While he ate, Malmus, proud of his guest, came and sat on the little red sofa which shook under his fits of asthma, and talked to him, while at a table near by a tall, thin woman took her place, the only relic of the old days left — a bony creature destitute of age known in the quarter as "everyone's old girl." Some kind-hearted student now married and settled far away had opened a credit for her at Malmus's before he went. Confined for so many years to this one pasture, the poor creature knew nothing of what was going on in the outside world; she had not even heard of Numa's triumph, and spoke to him pityingly as to one

whom fortune had passed by, and in the same rank and category as herself.

"Wall, poor old chum, how are things a-getting on? You know Pompon is married, and Laboulbène has passed his deputy at Caen."

Roumestan hardly answered a word, hurried through his dinner and rushed away through the streets, noisy with many beershops and fruit stalls, feeling the bitterness of a life of failure and a general impression of bankruptcy.

Several years passed thus, during which his name became better known and more firmly established, but with little profit to himself, except for an occasional gift of a copy of some statuette in Barbédienne bronze. Then he was called upon to defend a manufacturer of Avignon, who had made seditious silk handkerchiefs. There was some sort of a deputation pictured on them standing about the Comte de Chambord, but very confusedly done in the printing, only with great imprudence he had allowed the initials "H. V." (Henry Fifth) to be left, surrounded by a coat of arms.

Here was Numa's chance for a good bit of comedy. He thundered against the stupidity that could see the slightest political allusion in that H. V.! Why, that meant Horace Vernet — there he was, presiding over a meeting of the French Institute!

This "tarasconade" had a great local success that did him more service than any advertisement won in Paris could; above all, it gained him the active approbation of his Aunt Portal. At first

this was expressed by presents of olive oil and white melons, followed by a lot of other articles of food — figs, peppers, potted ducks from Aix, caviar from Martigues, jujubes, elderberry jam and St. John's-bread, a lot of boyish goodies of which the old lady herself was very fond, but which her nephew threw into a cupboard to spoil.

Shortly after arrived a letter, written with a quill in a large handwriting, which displayed the brusque accents and absurd phrases customary with his aunt, and betrayed her puzzle-headed mind by its absolute freedom from punctuation and by the lively way in which she jumped from one subject to the other.

Still, Numa was able to discover the fact that the good woman desired to marry him off to the daughter of a Councillor in the Court of Appeals in Paris, one M. Le Quesnoy, whose wife, a Mlle. Soustelle from Aps, had gone to school with her at the Convent of la Calade — big fortune — the girl handsome, good morals, somewhat cool and haughty — but marriage would soon warm that up. And if the marriage took place, what would his old Aunt Portal give her Numa? One hundred thousand francs in good clinking tin — on the day of the wedding!

Under its provincialisms the letter contained a serious proposition, so serious indeed that the next day but one Numa received an invitation to dine with the Le Quesnoys. He accepted, though with some trepidation.

The Councillor, whom he had often seen at the

Palais de Justice, was one of those men who had always impressed him most. Tall, slender, with a haughty face and a mortal paleness, sharp, searching eyes, a thin-lipped, tightly-closed mouth — the old magistrate, who originally came from Valenciennes, seemed like that town to be surrounded by an impregnable wall and fortified by Vauban. His cool Northern manner was most disconcerting to Numa. His high position, gained by his exhaustive study of the Penal Code, his wealth and his spotless life would have given him a yet higher position had it not been for the independence of his views and a morose withdrawal from the world and its gayeties ever since the death of his only son, a lad of twenty. All these circumstances passed before Numa's mental vision as he mounted the broad stone steps with their carved hand-rail of the Le Quesnoy residence, one of the oldest houses on the Place Royale.

The great drawing-room into which he was shown, with its lofty ceiling reaching down to the doors to meet the delicate paintings of its piers, the straight hangings with stripes in brown and gold-colored Chinese silk framing the long windows that opened upon an antique balcony, and also on one of the rose-colored corners of brick buildings on the square — all this was not calculated to change his first impressions.

But the welcome given him by Mme. Le Quesnoy soon put him at his ease.

This fragile little woman with her sad sweet smile, wrapped in many shawls and crippled by

rheumatism, from which she had suffered ever since she came to live in Paris, still preserved the accent and habits of her dear South, and she loved anything that reminded her of it. She invited Numa to sit down by her side, and looking affectionately at him in the dim light, she murmured: "The very picture of Evelina!" This pet name of his aunt, so long unheard by him, touched his quick sensibility like an echo of his childhood. It appeared that Mme. Le Quesnoy had long wished to know the nephew of her old friend, but her house had been so mournful since her son's death, and they had been so entirely out of the world, that she had never sought him out. Now they had decided to entertain a little, not because their sorrow was less keen, but on account of their two daughters, the eldest of whom was almost twenty years old; and turning toward the balcony whence they could hear peals of girlish laughter, she called, "Rosalie, Hortense, come in — here is Monsieur Roumestan!"

Ten years after that visit Numa remembered the calm and smiling picture that appeared, framed by the long window in the tender light of the sunset, of that beautiful young girl, and the absence of all affected embarrassment as she came towards him, smoothing the bands of her hair that her little sister's play had ruffled — her clear eyes and direct gaze.

He felt an instant confidence in and sympathy with her.

Once or twice during dinner, nevertheless, when

he was in the full flow of animated conversation he was conscious that a ripple as of disdain passed over the clear-cut profile and pure complexion of the face beside him — without question that "cool and haughty" air which Aunt Portal had mentioned, and which Rosalie got through her striking resemblance to her father. But the little grimace of her pretty mouth and the cold blue of her look softened quickly to a kindly attention, and she was again under the charm of a surprise she did not try to conceal. Born and brought up in Paris, Rosalie had always felt a fixed aversion to the South; its accent, its manners, even the country itself as she saw it in the vacations she occasionally spent at Aps — everything was antipathetic to her. It seemed to be an instinct of race, and was the cause of many gentle disputes with her mother.

"Nothing would induce me to marry a Southerner," Rosalie had laughingly declared, and she arranged in her own mind a type — a coarse, noisy, vacant fellow, combining an opera tenor and a drummer for Bordeaux wines, but with a fine head and well-cut features. Roumestan came pretty near to this clear-cut vision of the mocking little Parisian, but his ardent musical speech, taking on that evening an irresistible force by reason of the sympathy of those around him, inspired and aroused him, seeming even to make his face more refined. After the usual talk in low voices between neighbors at the table, those *hors-d'œuvres* of conversation that circulate with caviar and anchovy,

the Emperor's hunting parties at Compiègne became the general topic of conversation; those hunts in costume at which the invited guests appeared as grandees and grand ladies of the Court of Louis XV. Knowing M. Le Quesnoy to be a Liberal, Numa launched forth into a magnificent diatribe, almost a prophetic one. He drew a picture of the Court as a set of circus riders, women performers, grooms and jockeys riding hard under a threatening sky, pursuing the stag to its death to the accompaniment of lightning-flash and distant claps of thunder, and then — in the midst of all this revelry — the deluge, the hunting horns drowned, all this monarchical harlequinade ending in a morass of blood and mire!

Perhaps this piece was not entirely impromptu; probably he had got it off before at the committee meeting; but never before had his brilliant speech and tone of candor in revolt roused anywhere such enthusiasm and sympathy as he suddenly saw reflected in one sweet, serious countenance, that he felt turning toward him, while the gentle face of Mme. Le Quesnoy lit up with a ray of fun and seemed to ask her daughter: "Well, how do you like my Southerner now?"

Rosalie was captivated. Deep in her inmost heart she bowed to the power of that voice and to generous thoughts that accorded so well with all her youthful enthusiasms, her passion for liberty and justice. As women at a play will confound the singer with his song, the actor with his *rôle*, so she forgot to make allowances for the artist's

imagination. Oh, if she could but have known what an abyss of nothing lay below these professional phrases, how little he troubled himself about the hunting-parties at Compiègne! She did not know that he merely needed an invitation with the imperial crest on it, and he would have joined these self-same parties, in which his vanity, his tastes as actor and pleasure-seeker, would have found complete satisfaction. But she was under the charm. As he talked, it seemed to her the table grew larger, the dull, sleepy faces of the few guests, a certain President of the Chamber and an old physician, were transfigured; and when they returned to the drawing-room, the chandelier, lighted for the first time since her brother's death, had almost the dazzling effect upon her of the sun itself.

The sun was Roumestan.

He woke up the majestic old house, drove away mourning and the gloom that was piled in all the corners, the particles of sadness that accumulate in old dwellings; he seemed to make the facets of the mirrors glisten and give new life to the delightful panel paintings on the walls, which had been scarce visible for a hundred years.

"Are you fond of painting, Monsieur?"

"Fond of it, Mademoiselle? Oh, I should think so!"

The truth was that he knew absolutely nothing about it, but he had a stock of words and phrases ready for use on that subject as on all others, and while the servants were arranging the card tables he made the paintings on the well-preserved Louis

XIII walls the pretext for a quiet talk very near to the young girl.

Of the two, Rosalie knew much the more about art. Having lived always in an atmosphere of cultivation and good taste, the sight of a fine bit of sculpture or a great painting thrilled her with a special vibratory emotion which she felt rather than expressed, because of her reserved character and because the false emotions in the world are apt to keep down the real ones. At sight of them a superficial observer, however, noting the eloquent assurance with which the lawyer talked and the wide professional gestures he used, as well as the rapt attention of Rosalie, might have taken him for some great master giving a lesson to a pupil.

"Mamma, can we go into your room? I want to show Monsieur Roumestan the hunting panel."

At the whist table Mme. Le Quesnoy gave a quick inquiring glance at him whom she always called, with a peculiar tone of renunciation and humility in her voice, "Monsieur Le Quesnoy," and, receiving an affirmative nod from him which meant that the thing was in order, gave the desired permission.

They crossed a passage lined with books and found themselves in the old people's chamber, an immense room as majestic and antique as the drawing-room. The panel was above a small door beautifully carved.

"It is too dark to see it well," said Rosalie.

As she spoke she held up a double candlestick

she had taken from a card table, and with her arm raised, her graceful figure in fine relief, she threw the light upon the picture which showed Diana, the crescent on her brow, among her huntress maidens in the landscape of a pagan Paradise. But at this gesture of a Greek torch-bearer the light from the double candles fell upon her own head with its simple coiffure and sparkled in her clear eyes with their high-bred smile and on the virginal curves of her slender yet stately bust. She seemed more of a Diana than the pictured goddess herself. Roumestan looked at her; carried away by her charm of youthful innocence and candid chastity, he forgot who she was and what his purpose had been in coming, yes, all his dreams of fortune and ambition! He felt an insane desire to clasp this supple form in his arms, to shower kisses on her fine hair, the delicate fragrance of which intoxicated him, to carry off this enchanting being to be the safeguard and joy of his whole life; and something told him that if he attempted it she would permit it, and that she was his, his entirely, conquered, vanquished at the first sight.

Fire and wind of the South, you are irresistible!

"As she spoke she held up a double candlestick, she had taken from a card table"

CHAPTER III.

THE SEAMY SIDE OF A GREAT MAN (*continued*).

IF ever people were unsuited for life side by side it was these two. Opposites by instinct, by education and temperament, thinking alike on no one subject, they were the North and the South face to face without the slightest chance of fusion. Love feeds on contrasts like this and laughs when they are pointed out, so powerful does it feel itself. But later, when everyday life sets in, during the monotony of days and nights passed beneath the same roof, that mist which constitutes love disappears; the veil is lifted; they begin to see each other, and, what is worse, to judge each other!

It was some time before the awakening came to these young people; at least with Rosalie the illusion lasted. Clear-sighted and clever on all other subjects, for a long while she remained blind to Numa's faults and could not see how far in many ways she was his superior. It had not taken him long to relapse into his old self again. Passion in the South is short-lived because of its very violence. And then the Southerner is so perfectly assured of the inferiority of women that, once married and sure of his happiness, he installs him-

self like a bashaw in his home, receiving love as homage due and not of much importance; for, after all, it takes up a good deal of time to be loved, and Numa was much preoccupied just then arranging the new life which his marriage, his wealth and the high position in the law courts as son-in-law to M. Le Quesnoy necessitated.

The one hundred thousand francs given him by Aunt Portal sufficed to pay his debts to Malmus and the furnisher and to wipe out forever the dreary record of his straitened bachelor days. It was a delightful change from the humble *frichti* (lunch) at Malmus's on the old sofa with its worn red velvet, in company of "every one's old girl," to the dining-room in his new house in the Rue Scribe where, opposite his dainty little Parisian wife, he presided over the sumptuous dinners that he offered to the magnates of the law and of music.

The Provençal loved a life of eating, luxury and display, but he liked it best in his own house, without any trouble or ceremony, where a certain looseness was possible over a cigar and risky stories might be told. Rosalie resigned herself to keeping open house, the table always set, ten or fifteen guests every evening, and never anybody but men, among whose black coats her evening dress made the only point of color. There she stayed until with the serving of the coffee and the opening of cigar boxes she would slip away, leaving them to their politics and the coarse roars of laughter that accompany the close of bachelor dinners.

Only the mistress of a house knows what domestic complications arise when such constant and unusual services are required every day of the servants. Rosalie struggled uncomplainingly with this problem and tried to bring some order out of chaos, carried away as she was by the whirlwind of her terrible genius of a husband, who did not spare her the turbulence of his own nature, yet between two storms had a smile of approbation for his little wife. Her only regret was that she never had him enough to herself. Even at breakfast, that hasty morning's meal for a busy lawyer, there was always a guest between them, namely that male comrade without whom the man of the South could not exist, that inevitable some one to answer a bright remark and call forth a flash from his own wits, the arm on which condescendingly to lean, some henchman to catch his handkerchief as he sallied forth to the Palace of Justice!

Ah, how she longed to accompany him across the Seine, how glad she would have been to call for him on rainy days, wait, and bring him home in her carriage, nestled up to him behind the windows blurred with raindrops! She did not dare to suggest such things any more, so sure was she of some excuse, an appointment in the Lawyers' Hall with some one of three hundred intimate friends of whom the Provençal would say with deep emotion:

"He adores me! He would go through fire and water for me!"

That was his idea of friendship. But in other

respects, no selection whatever as to his friends! His easy good-nature and lively capriciousness caused him to throw himself into the arms of each man he met, but made him as easily drop him. Every week there was a new craze for someone whose name came up incessantly, a name which Rosalie wrote down conscientiously on the little menu card, but which presently disappeared as suddenly as if the new favorite's personality had been as flimsy and as easily burned as the little colored card itself.

Among these birds of passage one alone remained stationary, more from force of childish habit than from anything else, for Bompard and Roumestan were born in the same street at Aps. Bompard was an institution in the house, found there in a place of honor when the bride came home. He was a cadaverous creature with Don Quixote's head and a big eagle's nose and eyes like balls of agate set in a pitted, saffron-colored complexion that looked like Cordova leather; it was lined and seamed with the wrinkles one sees only in the faces of clowns and jesters which are forced constantly into contortions.

Bompard had never been a comedian, however. Numa had found him again in the chorus of the opera where he had sung for a short time. Beyond this, it was impossible to say what was real in the shifting sands of that career. He had been everywhere, seen everything and practised all trades. No great man or great event could be mentioned without his saying: "He is a friend of

mine," or "I was present at the time," and then would follow a long story to prove his assertion.

In piecing together these fragments of his history most astonishing chronological conclusions were arrived at; thus, at the same date Bompard led a company of Polish and Caucasian deserters at the siege of Sebastopol and was choir-master to the King of Holland and very close to the king's sister, for which latter indiscretion he was imprisoned for six months in the fortress at The Hague — which did not prevent him at the same time from making a forced march from Laghouat to Gadamès through the great African desert.

He told these wonderful tales with rare gestures, in a solemn tone, using a strong Southern accent, but with a continual twitching and contortion of his features as trying to the eyes as the shifting of the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope.

The present life of Bompard was as mysterious as his past. How and where did he live? And on what? He was forever talking of wonderful schemes for making money, such as a new and cheap manner of asphalting one corner of Paris, or, all of a sudden, he was deep in the discovery of an infallible remedy for the phylloxera and was only waiting for a letter from the Minister to receive the prize of one hundred thousand francs in order to be in funds to pay his bill at the little dairy where he took his meals, whose managers he had almost driven insane with his false hopes and extravagant dreams.

This crazy Southerner was Roumestan's delight.

He took him about, making a butt of him, egging him on, warming him up and exciting his folly. If Numa stopped in the street to speak to any one, Bompard stepped aside with a dignified air as if about to light a cigar. At funerals or first nights he was always turning up to ask every one in the most impressive haste: "Have you seen Roumestan anywhere?" He came to be as well known as Numa himself. This type of parasite is not uncommon in Paris; each great man has a Bompard dragging at his heels, who walks on in his shadow and comes to have a kind of personality reflected from that of his patron. It was a mere chance that Roumestan's Bompard really had a personality of his own, not a reflection of his master. Rosalie detested this intruder on her happiness, always between her and her husband, appropriating to himself the few precious moments that might have been hers alone. The two old friends always talked a patois that seemed to set her apart and laughed uproariously at untranslatable local jokes. What she particularly disliked about him was the necessity he was under of telling lies. At first she had believed these inventions, so unsuspicious was her true and candid nature, whose greatest charm was its harmony in word and thought, a combination that was audible in the crystalline clearness and steadiness of her musical voice.

"I do not like him — he tells lies," she said in deep disgust to Roumestan, who only laughed. To defend his friend, he said:

"No, he's not a liar; he's only gifted with a vivid imagination. He is a sleeper awake who talks out his dreams. My country is full of just such people. It is the effect of the sun and the accent. There is my Aunt Portal — and even I myself — if I did not have myself well in hand — "

She placed her little hand over his mouth:

"Hush, hush! I could not love you if you came from that side of Provence! "

The sad fact was that he did come from that very countryside. His assumed Paris manners and the veneer of society restrained him somewhat, but she was soon to see that terrible South appear in him after all, commonplace, brutal, illogical. The first time that she realized it was in regard to religion, about which, as about everything else, Numa was entirely in line with the traditions of his province.

Numa was the Provençal Roman Catholic who never goes to communion, never confesses himself except in cholera times, never goes to church except to bring his wife home after mass, and then stands in the vestibule near the holy-water basin with the superior air of a father who has taken his children to a show of Chinese shadows — yet a man who would let himself be drawn and quartered in defence of a faith he does not feel, which in no way controls his passions or his vices.

When he married he knew that his wife was of the same church as himself and that at the wedding in St. Paul's the priest had eulogized them in due form as befitted all the candles and carpets

and gorgeous flowers that go with a first-class wedding. He had never worried further about it. All the women whom he knew — his mother, his cousins, his aunt, the Duchesse de San Donnino, were devout Catholics; so he was much surprised after several months of marriage to observe that his wife never went to church. He spoke of it:

"Do you never go to confession?"

"No, my dear," she answered quietly, "nor you either, so far as I can see."

"Oh, I — that is quite different!"

"Why so?"

She looked at him with such a sincerely puzzled expression — she seemed so far from understanding her own inferiority as a woman, that he made no reply and waited for her to explain.

No, she was not a free-thinker, nor a strong-minded woman. Educated in Paris at a good school, she had had for confessor a priest of Saint-Laurent up to seventeen; when she left school, and even for some time after, she had fulfilled all her religious duties at the side of her mother, who was a bigoted Southerner. Then, one day, something within her seemed suddenly to give way, and she declared to her parents that she felt an insuperable repulsion for the confessional. Her pious mother would have tried to overcome what she looked upon as a whim, but her father had interfered:

"Let her alone; it took hold of me just as it has seized her and at the same age."

And since then she had consulted only her own

pure young conscience in regard to her actions. Otherwise she was a Parisian, a woman of the world to her finger-tips, and disliked the bad taste in displays of independence. If Numa wished to go to church she would go with him, as for a long while she had gone with her mother; but at the same time she would not lie or pretend to believe that in which she had lost all faith.

Numa listened to her in speechless amazement, alarmed to hear such sentiments expressed with a firmness and conviction in her own moral being that dissipated all his Southern ideas about the dependency of women.

"Then you don't believe in God?" he asked in his best forensic manner, his raised finger pointed solemnly toward the moldings of the ceiling. She gave a cry of astonishment: "Is it possible to do so?" — so spontaneously and with such conviction that it was as good as a confession of faith. Then he fell back on what the world would say, on social conventions, on the intimate connection between religion and monarchy. All the ladies whom they knew went to church, the duchess and Mme. d'Escarbès; they had their confessors to dine and at evening parties. Her strange views would have a bad effect upon them socially, were they known. He suddenly ceased speaking, feeling that he was floundering about in commonplaces, and the discussion ended there. For several Sundays in succession he went through a grand and hollow form of taking his wife to mass, whereby Rosalie gained the boon of a pleasant

walk on her husband's arm; but he soon wearied of the business, pleaded important engagements and let the religious question drop.

This first misunderstanding made no breach between them. As if seeking pardon, the young wife redoubled her devotion to her husband and her usual clever, smiling deference to his wishes. No longer so blind as in the earlier days, perchance she sometimes felt a vague premonition of things that she would not admit even to herself; but she was happy still, because she wished to be so, and because she lived in that dreamlike atmosphere enveloping the new life of a young married woman still surrounded by the dreams and uncertainty which are like the clouds of white tulle of the wedding dress that drape the form of a bride. The awakening was bound to come; to her it was sudden and frightful.

One summer day — they were staying at Orsay, a country seat belonging to the Le Quesnoys — her father and husband had already gone up to Paris, as they did every morning, when Rosalie discovered that the pattern for a little garment she was making was not to be found. The garment was part of the outfit for the expected heir. It is true there are beautiful things to be bought ready-made at the shops, but real mothers, the women who feel the mother-love in advance, like to plan and cut and sew; and as the pile of little clothes increases in the box, as each garment is finished, feel that they are hastening the matter and each object is bringing the advent of the

longed-for birth one step nearer. Rosalie would not for worlds have allowed any other hand to touch this tremendous work which had been begun five months before — as soon as she was sure of her coming happiness. On the bench where she sat under the big catalpa tree down there at Orsay were spread out dainty little caps that were only big enough to be tried on one's fist, little flannel skirts and dresses, the straight sleeves suggesting the stiff gestures of the tiny form for which they were designed — and now, here she was without this most important pattern !

"Send your maid up town for it," suggested her mother.

A maid, indeed ! What should she know about it? "No, no, I shall go myself. I will have finished my shopping by noon, and then I shall go and surprise Numa and eat up half his luncheon."

It was a beautiful idea, this bachelor luncheon with her husband, alone in the half-darkened house in the Rue Scribe, with the curtains all gone and the furniture covered up; it would be a regular spree ! She laughed to herself as all alone she ran up the steps, her errands done, and put her key softly in the lock so that she might surprise him. "It is pretty late, he has probably finished."

Indeed, she did find only the remnants of a dainty meal for two upon the table in the dining room, and the footman in his checked jacket hard at it emptying all the bottles and dishes. She thought of nothing at first but that her want of punctuality had spoiled her little plan. If only she had not

loafed so long in that shop over those adorable little garments, all lace and embroideries!

"Has your master gone out?"

The slowness of the servant in answering, the sudden pallor that overspread his big impudent face framed in long whiskers, did not at first strike her. She only saw a servant embarrassed at being caught helping himself to his master's wines and good things. Still it was absolutely necessary to say that his master was still there, but that he was very much occupied and would be occupied for quite a while. But it took him some time to stammer out this information. How the fellow's hands trembled as he cleared off the table and began to rearrange it for his mistress's luncheon!

"Has he been lunching alone?"

"Yes, Madame; at least, only Monsieur Bompard."

She had suddenly caught sight of a black lace scarf lying on a chair. The foolish fellow saw it at the same moment, and as their eyes were fixed on the same object the whole thing stood before her in a flash. Quickly, without a word, she crossed the little waiting room, went straight to the door of the library, opened it wide, and fell flat on the floor. They had not even troubled themselves to lock the door!

And if you had seen the woman! Forty years old, a washed-out blonde with a pimply complexion, thin lips and eyelids wrinkled like an old glove! Under her eyes were purple scars, signs of her evil life; her shoulders were bony and her

voice harsh. But — she was high-born, the Marquise d'Escarbès! which to the Southerner means everything. The escutcheon concealed her defects as a woman. Separated from her husband through an unsavory divorce suit, disowned by her family and no longer received in the great houses of the Faubourg, Mme. d'Escarbès had gone over to the Empire and had opened a political diplomatic salon, one of those which are for the police rather than politicians, where one could find the most notorious persons of the day — without their wives. Then, after two years of intrigues, having gathered together quite a following, she determined to appeal her law case. Roumestan, who had been her lawyer in the first suit, could not very well refuse to take up the second. He hesitated, nevertheless, for public opinion was very strong against her. But the entreaties of the Marquise took such convincing steps and the lawyer's vanity was so flattered by the steps themselves that he had yielded. Now that the case was soon to be on, they saw each other every day, either at her house or his own, pushing the affair vigorously and from two standpoints.

This terrible discovery nearly killed Rosalie; it struck her doubly in her sensibility to pain as a woman with child, bearing as she did two hearts within her, two spots for suffering. The child was killed, but the mother lived. But after three days of unconsciousness, when she regained memory and the power of suffering, her tears poured forth in a torrent, a bitter flood that noth-

ing could stem. When she had wept her heart out over the faithlessness of her husband, the empty cradle and the dainty little garments resting useless under the transparent blue curtains caused her anguish to break forth again in tears — but without a cry or lament!

Poor Numa was in almost as deep despair as she was. The hope of a little Roumestan, "the eldest," who is always a great personage in Provençal families, was gone forever, destroyed by his own fault. The pale face of his wife with its resigned expression, her compressed lips and smothered sobs, nearly broke his heart — her grief was so different from his way of acting, from the coarse, superficial sensibility that he showed as he sat at the foot of his victim's bed, saying at intervals with swimming eyes and trembling lips, "Come now, Rosalie, come now!" That was all he could find to say; but what vanity in that "Come now," uttered with the Southern accent that so easily takes on a sympathetic tone; yet beneath it all one seemed to hear: "Don't let it worry you, my darling little pet! Is it really worth while? Does it keep me from loving you just the same?"

It is true that he did love her just as much as his shallow nature was capable of loving constantly any one. He could not bear to think of any one else presiding over his house, caring for him, or petting him.

"I must have devotion about me," he said naïvely, and he well knew that the devotion she had to give was the perfection of everything that a man

could desire; so the idea of losing her was horrible to him. If that is not love, what is?

Rosalie, alas, was thinking on quite another line. Her life was wrecked, her idol fallen, her confidence in him forever lost. And yet she had forgiven him. She had forgiven him, however, as a mother yields to the child that cries and begs for her pardon; also for the sake of their name, her father's honored name that the scandal of a separation would have tarnished, and because every one believed her happy and she could not let them know the truth.

But let him beware! After this pardon so generously accorded, she warned him, a repetition of such an outrage would not find the same clemency. Let him never try it again, or their lives would be separated cruelly and forever under the eyes of the whole world. There was a firmness in her tone and look as she said this, which showed her capable of revenging her wounded woman's pride upon a society that held her imprisoned in its bonds.

Numa understood; he swore in perfect good faith that he would sin no more. He was still upset at the risk he had run of losing his happiness and that repose which was so necessary to him, all for an intrigue which had only appealed to his vanity. It was an immense relief to be rid of his great lady, his bony marquise, who but for her noble coat-of-arms was hardly more desirable than poor "every one's old girl" at the Café Malmus; to have no more love-letters to write and rendezvous

to make and keep. The knowledge that this silly sentimental nonsense which had so tried his ease-loving nature was over and done with enchanted him as much as his wife's forgiveness and the restored peace of his household.

He was as happy as before all this had happened. No apparent change took place in their mode of life — the table always laid, the same crowd of guests, the same round of entertainments and receptions at which Numa sang and declaimed and strutted, unconscious that at his side sat one whose beautiful eyes were evermore open and aware of facts under their veil of actual tears. She understood her great man now: all words and gestures, kind-hearted and generous at times, but kind only a little while, made up of caprice, a love of showing off and a desire to please like a coquette. She realized the shallowness of such a nature, undecided in his beliefs as in his dislikes; above all she feared for both their sakes the weakness hidden under his swelling words and resounding voice, a weakness which angered and yet endeared him to her, because, now that her wifely love had vanished, she felt the yearning towards him that a mother feels to a wayward child. Always ready to sacrifice herself and to be devoted in spite of treachery, the secret fear haunted her still: "If only he does not wear out my patience!"

Clear-sighted as she was, Rosalie quickly observed a change in her husband's political opinions. His relations with the Faubourg St. Germain had begun to cool. The nankin waistcoat and fleur-de-

lis pin of old Sagnier no longer awed him. Sagnier's mind, he said, was not what it had been. It was his shadow alone that presided at the Palace, a sleepy ghost that recalled far too well the epoch of the Legitimacy and its morbid inactivity, the next thing to death.

So it was that Numa slowly, gently developed towards the Empire, opening his doors to notable men among the Imperialists whom he had met at the house of Mme. d'Escarbès, whose influence had prepared him for this very change.

"Look out for your great man; I am afraid he is going to moult," said the councillor to his daughter at dinner one day, when the lawyer had been letting his coarse satire loose regarding the affair of Froschdorf, which he compared to the wooden horse of Don Quixote, stationary and nailed down, while his rider with bandaged eyes believed he was careering far through heavenly space.

She did not have to ask many questions. Deceitful as he might be, his lies, which he scorned to cover with complications or with finesse, were so careless that they betrayed him at once.

Going into the library one morning she found him absorbed in writing a letter, and leaning over him with her head near his she inquired:

"To whom are you writing?"

He stammered, tried to invent something, but the clear eyes searched him through and through like a conscience; he had an impulse to be frank because he could not help it.

It was a letter to the emperor accepting the position of councillor of state, written in the dry but emphatic style, that style at the bar which he employed when addressing the Bench whilst he gesticulated with his long sleeves. It began thus: "A Vendean of the South, raised in the belief in the monarchy and a respectful reverence for the past, I feel that I shall not do violence to my honor or to my conscience—"

"You must not send that!" said she quickly.

He flew into a rage, talked loudly and brutally like a shopman at Aps laying down the law in his own household. What business was it of hers, after all was said and done? What did she mean by it? Did he interfere with her about the shape of her bonnets or the models of her gowns? He stormed and thundered as if he had a public audience, but Rosalie maintained a tranquil, almost disdainful silence at such violence as this, mere remnant of a will already broken, sure of her victory in the end. These crises which weaken and disarm them are themselves the ruin of exuberant natures.

"You must not send that letter. It would give the lie to your whole life, to all your obligations—"

"My obligations! and to whom?"

"To me. Remember how we first knew each other, how you won my heart by your protestations and disgust at the emperor's masquerades. It was not so much the sentiments that I admired in you as the fixed purpose that you showed to up-

hold a righteous cause once adopted — your steady manly will!"

But he defended his conduct. Ought he eat his heart out all his life long in a party frozen stiff, without springs of action, a camp deserted and abandoned under the snow? Besides, it was not he who went to the Empire, it was the Empire that came to him. The emperor was an excellent man, full of ideas, much superior to his court — in fine, he brought to bear all the good arguments for playing the traitor. But Rosalie would accept none of them, and tried to show him that his conduct would not only be treacherous but short-sighted:

"Do you not see how uneasy these people are, how they feel that the earth is mined and hollow beneath their feet? The slightest jar from a rolling stone and the whole thing will crumble! And into what a gulf!"

She talked with perfect clearness, gave details, repeated many things that she, always a silent person, had picked up after dinner from the talks when the men would leave the women, intelligent or not, to languish over toilets and worldly scandal in conversation that even such topics could not enliven.

"Odd little woman!" thought Roumestan. Where had she learned all that she was saying? He could not get over the fact that she was so clever; and, following one of those sudden changes that make these gusty natures so lovable, he took this reasoning little head, so charming with youth and

yet so intelligent, between his hands and covered it with a passion of tender kisses.

"You are right, a thousand times right! I ought to write just the opposite!"

He was going to tear up the rough copy, but he noted that in the opening sentence there was a phrase that pleased him, one that might still serve his turn if it were changed a bit, somewhat in this way:

"A Vendean of the South, raised in the belief in the monarchy and a respectful reverence for the past, I feel that I should do violence to my honor and conscience, if I accepted the post which your Majesty —" etc.

This polite but firm refusal published in all the Legitimist papers raised Roumestan to a very different place in public opinion; it made his name a synonym for incorruptibility. "Cannot be rent," wrote the *Charivari* under an amusing cartoon which represented the toga of the great jurist resisting the violent tugging of the several political parties.

Shortly after this the Empire went to pieces and when the Assembly of Bordeaux met Numa had the choice between three departments which had elected him their Deputy to the House, entirely on account of his letter to the emperor. His first speeches, delivered with a somewhat forced and turgid eloquence, soon made him leader of all the parties of the Right.

He was only the small change of old Sagnier, but in these days of middle-class races, blue blood

rarely came to the front, and so the new leader triumphed on the benches of the Chamber as easily as on the old red divans at Father Malmus's café.

Councillor-general in his own department, the idol of the entire South, and raised still higher by the position of his father-in-law, who after the fall of the Empire had become first president of the court of appeals, Numa without doubt was marked out to become sooner or later a cabinet minister. In the meantime a great man in the eyes of every one but his own wife, he carried his fresh glories about, from Paris to Versailles and down to Provence, amiable, familiar, jolly and unconventional, bringing his aureola with him, it is true, but only too willing to leave it in its bandbox, like an opera hat when no ceremony calls for its presence.

CHAPTER IV.

A SOUTHERN AUNT — REMINISCENCES OF CHILDHOOD.

THE Portal mansion in which the great man dwells when he is in Provence is one of the show-places of Aps. It is mentioned by the Joanne guide-book in the same category as the temple of Juno, the amphitheatre, the old theatre and the tower of the Antonines, relics of the old Roman days of which the town is very proud and always keeps well furbished up. But it is not the heavy ancient arched gate of the old provincial residence itself, embossed with immense nails, nor the high windows, bristling with iron bars, spikes and pike-heads of a threatening sort, that they point out to the stranger who comes to see the town. It is only a little balcony with its black iron props on the first floor, corbelled out above the porch. For it is here that Numa shows himself to the crowd when he arrives and it is from here that he speaks. The whole town is witness that the iron balcony, which was once as straight as a rule, has been hammered into such an original shape, into such capricious curves, by the blows showered upon it by the powerful fist of the orator.

"*Té, vé!* our Numa has molded the iron!"

This they will say with bulging eyes and so much earnestness as to leave no room for doubt—say it with that imposing rolling of the "r" thus: *pétrrri le ferrr!*

They are a proud race, these good people of Aps, and kindly withal, but vivid in their impressions and most exaggerated in their language, of which Aunt Portal, a true type of the local citizenry, gave a very fair idea.

Immensely fat, apoplectic, her blood rushing to her pendulous cheeks purple like the lees of wine in fine contrast with her pale complexion, the skin of a former blonde. So far as one saw it the throat was very white, and her neat handsome iron-gray curls showed from beneath a cap decorated with lilac ribbon. Her bodice was hooked awry, but she was imposing nevertheless, having a majestic air and a pleasant smile and manner. It was thus that she appeared in the half-light of her drawing-room, always kept hermetically sealed after the Southern custom. You would say she looked like an old family portrait, or one of Mirabeau's old marquises, and very appropriate to her old house, built a hundred years ago by Gonzague Portal, chief councillor of the Parliament of Aix.

It is not uncommon to find people and houses in Provence that seem as if they belong to olden times, as if the last century, while passing out through those high panelled doors, had let a bit of her gown full of furbelows stick in the crack of the door.

But if in conversing with Aunt Portal you should be so unlucky as to hint that Protestants are as good as Catholics, or that Henry V may not ascend the throne at any moment, the old portrait will spring headlong out of its frame, and with the veins on its neck swelling and the hands tearing at the neatly hanging curls, will fly into an ungovernable passion, swear, threaten and curse! These outbursts have passed into tradition in the town and many wonderful tales are told upon the subject. At an evening party in her house a servant let fall a tray of wineglasses; Aunt Portal fell into one of her fits of rage, shouting and exciting herself with cries, reproaches and lamentations; finally her voice failed, and almost choking in her frenzy, unable to beat the unlucky servant, who had promptly fled, she raised the skirt of her dress and wrapped it about her head and face to conceal her groans and her visage disfigured by rage, quite regardless of the voluminous display of a portly, white-fleshed lady to which she was treating her guests.

In any other part of the country she would have been considered mad, but in Aps, the land of hot brains and explosive natures, they were satisfied to say that she "rode a high horse." It is true that passers-by on the quiet square before her doors on restful afternoons, when the cloistral stillness of the town is only broken by the chirping of the locusts or a few notes on a piano, are wont to hear such words as "monster," "thief," "assassin," "stealers of priests' property," "I 'll

cut your arm off," "I'll rip the skin off your stomach!" Then doors would slam and stairways tremble beneath the vaults of whitewashed stone; windows would open noisily, as though the mutilated bodies of the unhappy servants were to be thrown from them! But nothing happens; the servants placidly continue their work, accustomed to these tempests, knowing perfectly that they are mere habits of speech.

An excellent person, all things considered, ardent, generous, with a great desire to please and to sacrifice herself — a noble trait in these impulsive people, and one by which Numa had profited. Since he had been chosen deputy the house on the Place Cavalerie belonged to him, his aunt only reserving the right to remain there the rest of her life. And then, what a delight it was to her when the party from Paris arrived, with the receptions, the visits, the morning music and the serenades which the presence of the great man brought into that lonely life of hers, eager for excitement! Besides, she adored her niece Rosalie, partly because they were so entirely the opposite of each other and also because of the respect she felt for the daughter of the chief magistrate of France.

It really needed a world of patience on Rosalie's part and all the love of family inculcated in her by her parents to endure for two whole months the whims and tiresome caprices of this disordered imagination, always over-excited and as restless in mind as she was indolent in her big body. Seated

In the large vestibule, as cool as a Moorish court, but yet close and musty from the exclusion of air and sunshine, Rosalie, holding a bit of embroidery in her hands — for like a true Parisian she never could be idle — was obliged to listen for hours at a time to her surprising confidences. The enormous lady sat before her in an arm-chair, with her hands free in order to gesticulate, and recapitulated breathlessly the chronicles of the whole town. She sometimes depicted her maid-servants and coachman as monsters, sometimes as angels, according to the caprice of the moment. She would select some one against whom she apparently had some grudge, and cover the detested one with the foulest, bloodiest, most venomous abuse, relating stories like those in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.* Rosalie, who had lived with Numa, had luckily become accustomed to these frantic objurgations. She listened abstractedly; for the most part they passed in at one ear and out at the other; hardly did she stop to wonder how it came about that she, so reserved and discreet, could ever have entered such a family of theatrical persons who draped themselves with phrases and overflowed with gestures. It had to be a very strong bit of gossip to make her hold up Aunt Portal with an "Oh, my dear aunt!" thrown out with a far-away air.

"Perhaps you are right, my dear, perhaps I do exaggerate a little."

But Aunt Portal's tumultuous imagination was soon off again, recounting some comic or tragic tale with so much mimicry and dramatic effect

that she gave one the impression of wearing alternately the two masks borne by ancient actors of tragedy and of comedy. She only calmed down when she described her one visit to Paris and related the wonders of the arrival in the "Passage Somon," where she had stopped at a small hotel patronized by all the travelling salesmen of her native province, where they "took the air" in a glass-covered passage as stuffy and hot as a melon-frame. Of all her remarkable stories of Paris this place was the central point from which everything else evolved — it was the elegant, fashionable spot beyond all others.

These tiresome, empty tirades had at least the spice of being uttered in the strangest and most amusing kind of language, in which an old-school stilted French, the French of books of rhetoric, was mixed with the oddest provincialisms. Aunt Portal detested the Provençal tongue, that dialect so admirable in color and sonorousness, which only the peasants and people talk, which contains an echo of Latin vibrating across the deep blue sea. She belonged to the burgher class of Provence who translate *pécaïré* by *péchère* (sinner) and fancy they talk correctly.

When her coachman Ménicle (Dominick) in his frank way said to her in Provençal:

"*Voù baia de civado au chivaou*" (I am going to give the horses oats) — she would assume an austere air and say:

"I do not understand you — speak French, my good fellow!"

Then Ménicle, like a docile schoolboy, would say:

"*Je vais bayer dé civade au chivau.*"

"That is right, now I understand you!"—and he would go away thinking that he had been speaking the language. It is a fact that most of the people in the South below Valence only know this hybrid kind of French.

But besides all this Aunt Portal played upon her words by no means according to her fancy but in accordance with the rules of some local grammar. Thus she said *déligence* for *diligence*, *achéter* for *acheter*, *anédote* for *anecdote*, *régitre* for *régistre*. She called a pillow-slip (*taie d'oreiller*) a *coussinière*, an umbrella was an *ombrette*, the foot-warmer which she used at all seasons of the year was a *banquette*. She did not cry, she "fell to tears;" and though very "overweighted" she never took more than "half hour" for her round of the city. All this twaddle was larded with those little words and expressions without precise meaning which Provençals scatter through their speech, those verbal snips which they stuff between sentences to lesson their stress or increase their strength, or keep up the multifold character of the accent, such as

"*Aie, ouie, avai, açavai, au moins, pas moins, diffémemment, allons!*"

This contempt of Mme. Portal for the language of her province extended to its usages and its traditions and even to its costume. Just as she did not permit her coachman to lapse into Provençal,

in the same way she never would have allowed a servant to enter her house wearing the head-dress and neck-kerchief of Arles.

"My house is neither a *mas* (farm) nor a weaver's loft," said she. Nor would she let them wear a *chapo* either. To wear a bonnet is the distinctive hieratic sign of the ascendancy of the citizen in the provinces. The title of "madame" is one of its attributes, a title refused to any of the baser sort. It is amusing to see the condescension of the wife of a retired officer or municipal employee who earns eight hundred francs a year, doing her own marketing in an enormous bonnet, when she speaks to the wife of an immensely rich farmer from the Crau, in her picturesque headgear trimmed with real old thread lace. In the Portal mansion the ladies had worn bonnets for over a century. This made Mme. Portal very arrogant toward poor people and was the cause of a terrible scene between her and Roumestan a few days after the festival in the amphitheatre.

It was a Friday morning at breakfast, a regular Provençal breakfast, pretty and attractive to the eye although strictly a fast-day meal, for Aunt Portal was very keen about her orders. On the white cloth in picturesque array were big green peppers, alternating with blood-red figs, almonds and carved water-melons, that looked like big rose-colored magnolias, anchovy patties and little white rolls such as are to be found nowhere else — all very light dishes set among decanters of fresh water and bottles of light home-made wine. Out-

side in the sun the locusts and rays were chirping and glittering, and a broad band of golden light slid through a crevice into the great dining-room, vaulted and resounding like the refectory of a convent.

In the middle of the table on a chafing dish were two large cutlets designed for Numa. Notwithstanding that his name was uttered in all the prayers, perhaps because of it, the great man of Aps, alone of all the family, had obtained a dispensation from fasting from the cardinal. So there he sat feasting and carving his juicy cutlets, while his aunt and his wife and sister-in-law breakfasted on figs and watermelon.

Rosalie was used to it. The two days' fast every week was but a part of her yearly burden, as much a matter of course as the sunshine, the dust, the hot mistral wind, the mosquitoes, her aunt's gossip and the Sunday services at the church of St. Perpétue. But the youthful appetite of Hortense revolted against this continual fasting and it took all the gentle authority of the elder sister to prevent an outburst from the spoiled child, which would have shocked all Aunt Portal's ideas of the conduct becoming to a young person of refinement and education. So Hortense had to content herself with her husks, revenging herself by making the most awful grimaces, rolling up her eyes, snuffing up the smell of the cutlets and murmuring under her breath for Rosalie's benefit alone:

"It always happens so. I took a long ride this morning. I am as hungry as a tramp!"

She still wore her habit, which was as becoming to her tall, slim figure as was the straight, high collar to her irregular saucy little face, still flushed by her exercise in the open air. Her ride had given her an idea.

"Oh Numa, how about Valmajour? When are we going to see him?"

"Who is Valmajour?" answered Numa, whose fickle brain had already discarded all memory of the taborist. "*Té*, that's a fact, Valmajour! I had forgotten all about him. What a genius he is!"

It all came back to him — the arches of the amphitheatre echoing to the farandole with the dull vibration of the tabor; it fired his memory and so excited him that he called out decisively:

"Aunt Portal, do lend us the landau; we will set off directly after breakfast."

His aunt's brow darkened above her big eyes, flaming like those of a Japanese idol.

"The landau? *Avai!* What for? At least you're not going to take your wife and sister to see that player of the *tutu-panpan!*"

This word "tutu-panpan" so perfectly mimicked the sound of the fife and tabor that Roumestan burst out laughing, but Hortense took up the defence of the old Provençal tabor with much earnestness. Nothing that she had seen in the South had impressed her so much. Besides, it would not be honest to break one's word to the nice boy.

"He is a great artist! Numa, you said so yourself."

"Yes, yes, little sister, you are right; we must certainly go."

Aunt Portal in a towering rage said that she could not understand how a man like her nephew, a deputy, could put himself out for peasants, farmers, whose people from father to son had made music for the villages. Then, in her usual spirit of mimicry, she stuck out a disdainful lip and played with the fingers of one hand on an imaginary fife, while with the other she beat upon the table to represent the tabor, taking off the tabor-player's gestures.

"Nice people to take ladies to see! No one but Numa would dream of doing such a thing. Calling on the Valmajours! Holy mother of angels!" And becoming more and more excited, she accused them of crimes enough to make them out a brood of monsters as bloody and dreadful as the Trestaillon family, when suddenly across the table she caught the eye of her butler Ménicle, who came from the same village as the Valmajours and was listening to her lies, every feature strained in astonishment. At once she shouted to him in a terrible voice to "go and change himself quickly" and have the landau at the door at "two o'clock a quarter off." All the rages of Aunt Portal ended in this fashion.

Hortense threw down her napkin and ran and kissed the old lady rapturously on her fat cheeks. She was in a tumult of gayety and bounded for joy:

"Come, Rosalie, let us hurry!"

Aunt Portal looked at her niece:

"Well, I hope, Rosalie, that you are not going to vagabondize with these feather-heads!"

"No, no, aunt, I will stay with you" answered Rosalie, amused at the character of elderly relative that her unvarying amiability and resignation had created for her in that house.

At the right moment the carriage came promptly to the door, but they sent it on ahead, telling Ménicle to wait for them at the amphitheatre square, and Roumestan set out on foot with his little sister on his arm, full of curiosity and pride at seeing Aps in his company, to visit the house in which he was born and to retrace with him the streets through which he had so often walked when a child.

It was the hour of the midday rest. The whole town slept, silent and deserted, rocked by the south wind blowing in great fanlike gusts, cooling and freshening the fierce Provençal summer heat, but making walking difficult, especially along the Corso, which offered no resistance to it, where it roared round the little city with the bellowings of a loosened bull. Hortense, with her head down, her hands tightly clasped about her brother's arm, out of breath and bewildered, enjoyed the sensation of being raised and borne along by the gusts which were like resistless waves, noisy and complaining, white with foamlike dust. Sometimes they had to stop and cling to the ropes stretched along the ramparts for use on windy days. Owing to the whirlwinds in which bits of bark and plane-tree seeds spun round, and owing to its solitude

the Corso had an air of distress in its wide desolation, still soiled as it was with the remains of the recent market, strewn with melon-rinds, straw litters, empty casks, as if the mistral alone had charge of the street cleaning.

Roumestan was anxious to reach the carriage as soon as possible, but Hortense enjoyed this battle with the hurricane and insisted on walking farther, panting and overborne by the gust that curled her blue veil three times around her hat and molded her short walking skirt against her figure as she walked. She was saying:

"It is queer how different people are! Rosalie, now, hates the wind. She says it blows away all her ideas, keeps her from thinking. Now me the wind excites, intoxicates!"

"So it does me!" said Numa, clinging on to his hat, his eyes full of water, and then suddenly, as they turned a corner:

"Ah, here is my street — I was born here."

The wind was going down, at least they felt it less; it was blowing farther away with a sound as of billows breaking on a beach, as one hears them from the quiet inner bay. The street was a largish one, paved with pointed stones, without sidewalks, and the house an insignificant little gray structure standing between an Ursuline convent shaded with big plane-trees and a fine old seignorial mansion on which was carved a coat of arms and the inscription "Hôtel de Rochemaure." Opposite stood a very old and characterless building with broken columns, defaced statues and grave-stones with

Roman inscriptions carved on them; it had the word "Academy" in faded gilt letters over a green door.

In that little gray house the great orator first saw the light on the 15th of July, 1832; it was easy to draw more than one parallel between his narrow, classical talent and his education as a Catholic and a Legitimist, and that little house of needy citizens with a convent on one side and a seignorial residence on the other, and a provincial academy in front of it.

Roumestan was filled with emotion, as he always was over anything concerning himself. He had not visited this spot for perhaps thirty years; it needed the whim of this young girl to bring him here. He was much struck with the immutability of things. He recognized in the wall a shutter-catch that his childish hand had turned and played with every morning as he passed on his way up the street. The columns and precious torsos of the academy threw their shadows on the same spot as of old. The rose-laurel bushes had the same spicy odor and he showed Hortense the narrow window where his mother had sat and signed to him to hurry when he came from the friars' school:

"Come up quickly, father has come in!" His father did not like to be kept waiting.

"Tell me, Numa, is it really true? were you really educated by the friars?"

"Yes, little sister, until I was twelve years old, and then Aunt Portal sent me to the Assumption,

the most fashionable boarding-school in the town; but it was the Ignorantins over there in that big barrack with yellow shutters who taught me to read."

As he called to mind the pail of brine under the Brother's chair in which were soaked the straps with which they beat the boys, to make the pain greater, he shuddered; he remembered the large paved class-room where they were made to say their lessons on their knees and had to crawl up holding out their hands to be punished on the slightest pretext; he recalled how the Brother in his shabby black gown stood stiff and rigid, with his habit rolled up beneath his arm, the better to strike his pitiless blows — Brother Crust-to-cook, as he was called, because he was the cook. He remembered how the dear Brother cried "ha!" and how his little inky fingers tingled with the pain as if ants were biting them. As Hortense cried aloud in dismay at the brutality of such punishments, he related others still more dreadful; for example, they were obliged to clean the freshly watered pavements with their tongues, the dust and water making a muddy subtance that injured the tender palates of the naughty children.

"It is shameful! and you defend such people and speak in their favor in the Chamber?"

"Ah, my dear, that is politics!" said Roumestan calmly.

As they talked they were threading a labyrinth of small, dingy streets, almost oriental in their character, where old women lay asleep on their door-

steps, and other streets, though not so sombre, where long pieces of printed calicoes fluttered in explanation of signboards on which were painted: "Haberdashery," "Shoes," "Silks."

Thence they came out on what was called in Aps the "Little Square," with its asphalt melting in the hot sun and surrounded by shops, at this hour closed and silent, in the narrow shadow of whose walls boot-blacks slept peacefully, their heads resting on their boxes, their limbs stretched out like those of drowned people, wrecks of the tempest that has just swept over the town. An unfinished monument occupied the centre of the little square. Hortense wished to know what was ultimately to be the statue placed upon it and Roumestan smiled in an embarrassed way.

"It is a long story!" he answered, hurrying on.

The town of Aps had voted a statue to Numa, but the Liberals of the "Vanguard" had strongly disapproved of this apotheosis of a living man and so his friends had not dared to go on with it. The statue was all ready, but now probably they would wait for his death before raising it. Surely it 's a glorious thought that after your funeral you will have civic recognition and that you die only to rise again in bronze or marble; but this empty pedestal shining in the sun seemed to Roumestan, whenever he passed it, as gloomy as a majestic family vault; it was not until they had reached the amphitheatre that he could dispel his funereal thoughts.

The old structure, divested of its Sunday cheer-

fulness and returned to its solemnity of a great and useless ruin, seemed damp and cheerless as it loomed darkly against the rays of the setting sun, with its dark corridors and floors caved in here and there and stones crumbling beneath the footsteps of the centuries.

"How dreadfully sad it is!" said Hortense, regretting the music of Valmajour's fife; but to Numa it did not seem sad. His happiest days had been passed there — his childish days with all their pleasures and longings. Oh, the Sundays at the bull-fights, prowling around the gates with other poor children who lacked ten sous to pay for their tickets! In the hot afternoon sun they crawled into some corner where a glimpse of the arena could be obtained. What pleasures of forbidden fruits! — the red-stockinged legs of the bull-fighters, the wrathful hoofs of the bull, the dust of the combat rising from the arena amid the cries of "Bravo!" and the bellowings and the roar of the multitude! The yearning to get inside was not to be resisted. While the sentinel's back was turned the bravest of them would wriggle through the iron bars with a little effort.

"I always got through!" said Roumestan in ecstasy. The history of his whole life was expressed in those few words. By chance or by cleverness — no matter how close were the bars — the Southerner always wriggled through.

"I was thinner in those days, all the same," he said with a sigh and he looked with comic regret at the narrow bars of the grille and then at his big

white waistcoat, within which lay the solid sign of his forty years.

Behind the enormous amphitheatre they found the carriage, safely harbored from wind and sun. They had to wake up Ménicle, who was sleeping peacefully on the box between two large baskets of provisions, wrapped in his heavy cloak of royal blue. But before getting in Numa pointed out to Hortense an old inn at a distance whose sign read: "To the Little St. John, coach and express office," the whitewashed front and large open sheds of which took up one whole corner of the square. In these sheds were ancient stage-coaches and rural chaises long unused, covered with dust, their shafts raised high in air from beneath their gray covers.

"Look there, little sister," he cried with emotion. "It was from this spot that I set out for Paris one-and-twenty years ago. There was no railway then; we went by coach as far as Montélimar, then up the Rhône. Heavens, how happy I was! and how your big Paris frightened me! It was evening — I remember it so well. . ."

He spoke quickly, reminiscences crowding each other in his mind.

"The evening, ten o'clock, in November, beautiful moonlight. The guard's name was Fouque, a great person! While he was harnessing we walked about with Bompard — yes, Bompard — you know we were already great friends. He was, or thought he was, studying for a druggist and meant to join me in Paris. We made many plans for living

together and helping each other along in the world to get ahead quicker — in the meantime he encouraged me, gave me good advice — he was older than I. My great bugbear was the fear of being ridiculous — Aunt Portal had ordered for me a travelling wrap called a Raglan; I was a little dubious about that Raglan, so Bompard made me put it on and walk before him in it. *Tél* I can see yet my shadow beside me as I walked, and gravely, with that knowing air he has, he said: 'That is all right, old boy; you don't look ridiculous.' — Ah, youth, youth!"

Hortense, who was beginning to fear that they should never get away from this town where every stone was eloquent of reminiscences for the great man, led the way gently towards the carriage.

"Let us get in, Numa. We can talk just as well as we drive along."

CHAPTER V.

VALMAJOUR.

IT takes hardly more than two hours to drive from Aps to Cordova Mountain provided the wind is astern. Drawn by the two old horses from the Camargue, the carriage went almost by itself, propelled by the mistral which shook and rattled it, beating on its leather hood and curtains or blowing them out like sails.

Out here it did not bellow any more as it did round the ramparts and through the vaulted passages of the town; but, free of all obstacles, driving before it the great plain itself, where a solitary farm and some peasant manses here and there, forming gray spots in the green landscape, seemed the scattering of a village by the storm, the wind passed in the form of smoke before the sky, and like sudden dashes of surf over the tall wheat and olive orchards, whose silvery leaves it made to flutter like a swarm of butterflies. Then with sudden rebounds that raised in blond masses the dust that crackled under the wheels it fell upon the files of closely pressed cypresses and the Spanish reeds with their long rustling leaves, which made one feel that there was a river flowing beside the road. When for one moment it stopped, as if

short of breath, one felt all the weight of summer; then a truly African heat rose from the earth, which was soon driven off by the wholesome, revivifying hurricane, extending its jovial dance to the very farthest point on the horizon, to those little dull, grayish mounds which are seen on the horizon in all Provençal landscapes, but which the sunset turns to iridescent tints of fairyland.

They did not meet many people. An occasional huge wagon from the quarries filled with hewn stones, blinding in the sunlight; an old peasant woman from Ville-des-Baux bending under a great *couffin* or basket of sweet-smelling herbs; the robe of a medicant friar with a sack on his back and a rosary round his waist, his hard, tonsured head sweating and shining like a Durance pebble; or else a group of people returning from a pilgrimage, a wagon-load of women and girls in holiday attire, with fine black eyes, big chignons and bright-colored ribbons, coming from Sainte Baume or Notre-Dame-de-Lumière. Well, the mistral gave to all these people, to hard labor, to wretchedness and to superstition the same flow of health and good spirits, gathering up and scattering again during its rushes the hymn of the monk, the shrill canticles of the pilgrims, the bells and jingling blue glass beads of the horses and the "*Dia! hue!*" of the carters, as well as the popular refrain that Numa, intoxicated by the breeze of his native land, poured forth with all the power of his lungs and with wide gesticulations that were waved from both the carriage doors at once:

" Beau soleil de la Provence,
Gai compère du mistral!"
(Splendid sun of old Provence,
Of the mistral comrade gay!)

Suddenly he cried to the coachman: "Here! Ménicle, Ménicle!"

"Monsieur Numa?"

"What is that stone building on the other side of the Rhône?"

"That, Monsieur Numa, is the *jonjon* of Queen Jeanne."

"Oh, yes, that's so — I remember; poor *jonjon!* Its name is as much of a ruin as the tower itself!"

And then he told Hortense the story of the royal dungeon, for he was thoroughly grounded in his native legends.

That ruined and rusty tower up there dated from the time of the Saracen invasion, although more modern than the ruin of the abbey near it, a bit of whose half crumbled wall still remained standing near at hand, with its row of narrow windows showing against the sky and its big ogival doorway. He showed her, against the rocky slope, a worn pathway leading to a pond that shone like a cup of crystal, where the monks used to go to fish for eels and carp for the table of the abbot. As they looked at the lovely spot Numa remarked that the men of God had always known how to select the choicest spots in which to pass their comfortable, restful lives, generally choosing the summits where they might soar and dream, but whence

they descended upon the quiet valleys and levied their toll on all the good things from the surrounding villages.

Oh, Provence in the Middle Ages! land of the troubadours and courts of beauty!

Now briers dislocate the stones of the terraces erstwhile swept by the trains of courtly beauties — Stephenettes or Azalaïses — while ospreys and owls scream at night in the place where the dead and gone troubadours used to sing! But was there not still a perfume of delicate beauty, a charming Italian coquetry pervading this landscape of the Alpilles, like the quiver of a lute or viol floating through the pure, still air?

Numa grew excited, forgetting that he had only his sister-in-law and old Ménicle's blue cloak for audience, and, after a few commonplaces fit for local banquets and meetings of the Academy, broke forth into one of those ingenious and brilliant impromptus that proved him to be indeed the descendant of the light Provençal troubadours.

"There is Valmajour!" said Ménicle all at once, pointing upwards with his whip as he leaned round on the box.

They had left the highroad and were climbing a zigzag path up the side of Cordova Mountain, narrow and slippery with the lavender whose fragrance filled the air with a smell of burnt incense as the carriage wheels passed. On a plateau half way up, at the foot of a black, dilapidated tower, the roofs of the farmstead could be seen. Here it was that for years and years the Valmajours had

lived, from father to son, on the site of the old château whose name abided with them. And who knows? perhaps these peasants really were the descendants of the princes of Valmajour, related to the counts of Provence and to the house of Baux. This idea, imprudently expressed by Roumestan, was eagerly taken up by Hortense, who thus accounted to herself for the really high-bred manners of the taborist.

As they conversed in the carriage on the subject Ménicle listened to their talk in amazement from his box. The name of Valmajour was common enough in the province; there were mountain Valmajours and Valmajours of the valley, according as they dwelt on upland or on plain. "So they are all noblemen!" he wondered. But the astute Provençal kept his thoughts on the subject to himself.

As they advanced further into this desolate but beautiful landscape the imagination of the young girl, excited by Numa's animated conversation, gave free vent to its romantic impressions, stimulated by the brightly-colored fantasies of the past; and looking upward and seeing a peasant woman sitting on a buttress of the ruined tower, watching the approach of the strangers, her face in profile, her hand shading her eyes from the sun, she imagined she saw some princess wearing the mediæval wimple gazing down upon them from her feudal tower — like an illustration in an old book.

The illusion was hardly dispelled when, on leav-

ing the carriage, they saw before them the sister of the taborist, who was making willow screens for silk worms. She did not rise, although Ménicle had shouted to her from a distance: "*Vé!* Audiberte, here are visitors for your brother!" Her face with its delicate, regular features, long and green as an unripe olive, expressed neither pleasure nor surprise, but kept the concentrated look that brought the heavy black eyebrows together in front and seemed to tie a knot below her obstinate brows, as if with a hard, fixed line. Numa, somewhat taken aback by this frigid reception, said hastily: "I am Numa Roumestan, the deputy —"

"Oh, I know who you are well enough," she answered gravely, and throwing down her work in a heap by her side: "Come in a moment, my brother will be here presently."

When she stood up their hostess lost her imposing appearance; short of stature, with a large bust, she walked with an ungraceful waddle that spoiled the effect of her pretty head charmingly set off by the little Arles head-dress and the picturesque fichu of white muslin with its bluish shadow in every fold which she wore over her shoulders. She led her guests into the house. This peasant's cottage, leaning up against its ruined tower, seemed to have imbibed a distinguished air, with its coat-of-arms in stone over a door shaded by an awning of reeds cracked by the heat of the sun and its big curtain of checked muslin stretched across the door to keep out the mosquitoes. The old guard-room, with its ceiling riddled by cracks, its tall,

ancient chimneypiece and its white walls, was lighted only by small green-glass windows and the curtain stretched across the door.

In the dim light could be seen the black wooden kneading-trough, shaped like a sarcophagus, carved with designs of wheat and flowers; over it hung the open-work wicker bread-basket, ornamented with little Moorish bells, in which the bread is kept fresh in Provençal farm-houses. Two or three sacred images, the Virgin, Saint Martha and the *tarasque*, a small red copper lamp of antique form hanging from the beak of a mocking-bird carved in white wood by one of the shepherds, and on each side of the fireplace the salt and the flour boxes, completed the furniture of the big room, not forgetting a large sea-shell, with which they called the cattle home, glittering on the mantelpiece above the hearth.

A long table ran lengthwise through the hall, on each side of which were benches and stools. From the ceiling hung strings of onions black with flies, that buzzed loudly whenever the door curtain was raised.

"Take a seat, sir — a seat, madame; you must share the *grand boire* with us."

The *grand boire* or "big drink" is the lunch partaken of wherever the peasants are working — out in the fields, under the trees, in the shade of a mill, or in a roadside ditch. But the Valmajours took theirs in the house, as they were at work near by. The table was already laid with little yellow earthen dishes in which were pickled olives and

romaine salad shining with oil. In the willow stand where the bottles and glasses are kept Numa thought he saw some wine.

"So you still have vineyards up here?" he asked smilingly, trying to ingratiate himself with this queer little savage. But at the word "vineyards" she sprang to her feet like a goat bitten by an asp, and in a moment her voice struck the full note of indignation. Vines! oh, yes! nice luck they had had with their vineyards! Out of five only one was left to them — the smallest one, too, and that they had to keep under water half the year, — water from the *roubine* at that, costing them their last sou! And all that — who was to blame for it? the Reds, those swine, those monsters, the Reds and their godless republic, that had let loose all the devils of hell upon the country!

As she spoke in this passionate manner her eyes grew blacker with the murky look of an assassin; her pretty face was all convulsed and disfigured, her mouth was distorted and her black eyebrows made with their knot a big lump in the middle of her brow. The strangest of all was that in spite of her fury she continued her peaceful avocations, making the coffee, blowing the fire, coming and going, gesticulating with whatever was in her hand, the bellows or the coffee-pot, or a blazing brand of vine-wood from the fire, which she brandished like the torch of a Fury. Suddenly she calmed down.

"Here is my brother," she said.

The rustic curtain, brushed aside, let in a flood of

white sunlight against which appeared the tall form of Valmajour, followed by a little old man with a smooth face, sunburned until it was as black and gnarled as the root of a diseased vine. Neither father nor son showed any more excitement at the sight of the visitors than Audiberte.

The first greeting over, they seated themselves at the table, on which had been spread the contents of the two baskets that Roumestan had brought in the carriage, at sight of which the eyes of old Valmajour shone with little joyous sparkles. Roumestan, who could not recover from the want of enthusiasm about himself shown by these peasants, began at once to speak of the great success on the Sunday at the amphitheatre. That must have made him proud of his son!

"Yes, yes," mumbled the old man, spearing his olives with his knife. "But I too in my time used to get prizes myself for my tabor-playing" — and he smiled the same wicked smile that had played on his daughter's lips in her recent gust of temper. Very peaceful just now, Audiberte sat upon the hearthstone with her plate upon her knees; for, although she was the mistress of the house and a very tyrannical one at that, she still obeyed the ancient Provençal custom that did not allow the women to sit at the table and eat with their men. But from that humble spot she listened attentively all the while to what they were saying and shook her head when they spoke of the festival at the amphitheatre. She did not care for the tabor, herself — *nani!* no indeed! Her mother had been

killed by the bad blood her father's love for it had occasioned. It was a profession, look you, fit for drunkards; it kept people from profitable work and cost more money than it made.

"Well then, let him come to Paris," said Roumestan. "Take my word for it, his tabor will coin money for him there. . . ."

Spurred on by the utter incredulity of the country girl, he tried to make her understand how capricious Paris was and how the city would pay almost anything to gratify its whims. He told her of the success of old Mathurin, who used to play the bagpipes at the "Closerie des Genets," and how inferior were the Breton bagpipes, coarse and shrieking, fit only for Esquimaux in the Polar Circle to dance to, when compared with the tabor of Provence, so pretty, so delicate and high-bred! He could tell them that all the Parisian women would go wild over it and all wish to dance the *farandole.* Hortense also grew excited and put in her oar, while the taborist smiled vaguely and twirled his brown moustache with the fatuous air of a lady-killer.

"Well now, come! Give me an idea what he would earn by his music!" cried the peasant girl. Roumestan thought a moment. He could not say precisely. One hundred and fifty to two hundred francs —

"A month?" quoth the old man excitedly.

"Heavens! no — a day!"

The three peasants started and then looked at each other. From any one else but M. Numa

the deputy, member of the General Council, they would have suspected a joke, a *galéjade!* But with him of course the matter was serious. Two hundred francs a day—*foutré!* The musician himself wished to go at once, but his more prudent sister would have liked to draw up a paper for Roumestan to sign; and then quietly, with lowered eyelids, that the money greed in her eyes might not be seen, she began to canvass the matter in her hypocritical voice.

Valmajour was so much needed at home, *pécairé!* He took care of the property, ploughed, dressed the vines, his father being too old now for such work. What should they do if her brother went away? And he—he would be sure to be homesick alone in Paris, and his money, his two hundred francs a day, who would take care of it in that awful great city? And her voice hardened as she spoke of money that she could not take care of and stow carefully away in her most secret drawer.

"Well," said Roumestan, "come to Paris with him."

"And the house?"

"Leave it or sell it. You can buy a much better one when you come back."

He hesitated as Hortense glanced warningly at him, and, as if remorseful for disturbing the quiet life of these simple people, he said:

"After all, there is a great deal besides money in this life. You are lucky enough as you are."

Audiberte interrupted him sharply: "Lucky?

Existence is a struggle; things are not as they used to be!"—and she began again to whine about the vineyards, the silk-worms, the madder, the vermilion and all the other vanished riches of the country. Nowadays one had to work in the sun like cart-horses. It is true that they expected to inherit the fortune of Cousin Puyfourcat, the colonist in Algiers, but Algeria is so far away; and then the astute little peasant, in order to warm Numa up, whom she reproached herself for causing to lose some of his enthusiasm on the subject, turned in a catty way to her brother and said in her coaxing, singsong voice:

"*Qué*, Valmajour! suppose you play something for the pleasure of the pretty young lady."

Ah, clever girl! she was not mistaken. At the first blow of the stick, at the first pearly notes of the fife Roumestan was trapped once more and went into raptures.

The musician leaned against the curb of an old well in front of the farmhouse door. Over the well was an iron frame, round which a wild fig-tree had wound itself and made a marvellously picturesque background for his handsome figure and swarthy face. With his bare arms, his dusty, toil-worn garments, his uncovered sun-browned breast, he looked nobler and prouder than he had appeared when in the arena, where his natural grace had a somewhat tawdry touch through a certain striving after theatrical effect. The old airs that he played on his rustic instrument, made poetic by the solitude and silence of the mountains and wak-

ing the ancient golden ruins from their slumbers in stone, floated like skylarks round the slopes all gray with lavender or checkered with wheat and dead vines and mulberry-trees with their broad leaves casting longer but lighter shadows on the grass at their feet. The wind had gone down. The setting sun played upon the violet line of the Alpilles and poured into the hollows of the rocks a very mirage of lakes, of liquid porphyry and of molten gold.

All along the horizon there seemed as it were a luminous vibration, like the stretched cords of a lyre, to which the song of the crickets and the hum of the tabor furnished the sonorous base. Silent and delighted, Hortense, seated on the parapet of the old tower, leaning her elbow on the fragment of a broken column near which a pomegranate grew, listened and admired while she let her romantic little mind wander, filled with the legends and stories that Roumestan had told her on the way to the farm.

She pictured to herself the old château rising from its ruins, its towers rebuilt, its gates renewed, its cloister-like arches peopled with lovely women in long-bodiced gowns, with those pale, clear complexions that the sun cannot injure. She herself was a princess of the house of Baux with a pretty name of some saint in a missal and the musician who was giving her a morning greeting was also a prince, the last of the Valmajours, dressed in the costume of a peasant.

"Of a certes, ywis, the song once finished," as

the chroniclers of the courts of love of old used to say, she broke from the tree above her a bunch of pomegranate blossoms and held it out to the musician as the prize won by his playing. He received it with gallantry and wound it round the strings of his tabor.

CHAPTER VI.

CABINET MINISTER!

THREE months have passed since that expedition to Mount Cordova.

Parliament had met at Versailles in a deluge of November rain, which brought the low cloudy sky down to the lakes in the parks, enveloped everything in mist and wrapped the two Chambers in a dreary dampness and darkness; but it had done nothing to cool the heat of political hatreds. The opening was stormy and threatening. Train after train filled with deputies and senators followed and crossed each other, hissing, whistling, spluttering, blowing defiant smoke at each other as if animated by the same passions and intrigues they were carrying through the torrents of rain. During this hour in the train, discussion and loud-voiced conversation prevail above all the tumult of rushing wheels in the different carriages, as violently and furiously as if they were in the Chamber.

The noisiest, the most excited of all is Roumestan. He has already delivered himself of two speeches since Parliament met. He addresses committees, talks in the corridors, in the railway station, in the café, and makes the windows tremble

in the photographer's shop where all the Rights assemble. Little else is seen but that restless outline and heavy form, his big head always in motion, the roll of his broad shoulders, so formidable in the eyes of the Ministry, which he is about to "down" according to all the rules, like one of the stoutest and most supple of his native Southern wrestlers.

Ah! the blue sky, the tabors, the cicadas, all the bright pleasures of his vacation days — how far away they seem, how utterly dislocated and vanished! Numa never gives them a moment's thought nowadays, entirely carried away as he is by the whirl of his double life as politician and man of the law. Like his old master Sagnier, when he went into politics he did not renounce the law, and every evening from six o'clock to eight his office in the Rue Scribe is thronged with clients.

It looked like a legation, this office managed by Roumestan. The first secretary, his right-hand man, his counsellor and friend, was a very good legal man of business named Méjean, a Southerner, as were all Numa's following; but from the Cévennes, the rocky region of the South, which is more like Spain than Italy, where the inhabitants have retained in their manners and speech the prudent reserve and level-headed common-sense of the renowned Sancho.

Vigorous, robust, already a little bald, with the sallow complexion of sedentary workers, Méjean alone did all the work of the office, clearing away papers, preparing speeches, trying to reconcile

facts with his friend's sonorous phrases — some say his future brother-in-law's. The other secretaries, Messieurs de Rochemaure and de Lappara, two young graduates related to the noblest families in the province, are only there for show, in training for political life under Roumestan's guidance.

Lappara, a handsome tall fellow with a neat leg, a ruddy complexion and a blond beard, son of the old Marquis de Lappara, chief of the Right in the Bordeaux district, is a fair type of that Creole South; he is a gabbler and adventurer, with a love for duels and prodigalities (*escampatives*). Five years of life in Paris, one hundred thousand francs gone in "bucking the tiger" at the clubs, paid for with his mother's diamonds, had sufficed to give him a good boulevard accent and a fine crusty tone of gold on his manners.

Viscount Charlexis de Rochemaure, a compatriot of Numa, is of a very different kind. Educated by the Fathers of the Assumption, he had made his law studies at home under the superintendence of his mother and an abbé; he still retained from that early education a candid look and the timid manners of a theological student that contrasted vividly with his goatee in the style of Louis XIII, the combination making him seem at one and the same time foxy and a muff.

Big Lappara tries hard to initiate this young Tony Lumpkin into the mysteries of Parisian life. He teaches him how to dress himself, what is *chic* and what is not *chic*, to walk with his neck forward

and his mouth drawn down and to seat himself all of a piece, as it were, with his legs extended in order not to wrinkle his trousers at the knees. He would like to shake his simple faith in men and things, to cure him of that love of superstitions which simply classes him among the quill-drivers.

Not a bit of it! the viscount likes his work and when he is not at the Palace or the Chamber with Roumestan, as to-day for instance, he sits for hours at the secretaries' table in the office next to the chief's and practises engrossing. The Bordeaux man, on the contrary, has drawn an arm-chair up to the window, and in the twilight, with a cigar in his mouth and his legs stretched out, lazily watches through the falling rain and the steaming asphalt the long procession of carriages driving up to the doors with every whip in the air; for to-day is Mme. Roumestan's Thursday.

What a lot of people! and still they come; more and more carriages! Lappara, who boasts of knowing thoroughly the liveries of the great people in Paris, calls out the names as he recognizes them: "Duchesse de San Donnino, Marquis de Bellegarde — hello! the Mauconseils, too! Now I'd like to know what that means?" and turning towards a tall, thin person who stands by the mantelpiece drying his worsted gloves and his light-colored trousers, too thin for the season, carefully turned up over his cloth shoes: "Have you heard anything, Bompard?"

"Heard anythink? Sartainly I have," was the answer in a broad accent.

Bompard, Roumestan's mameluke, has the honorary position of a fourth secretary who does outside business, goes to look for news and sings his patron's praises about the streets. This occupation does not seem to be a lucrative one, judging from his appearance, but that is really not Numa's fault. Aside from the midday meal and an occasional half-louis, this singular kind of parasite could never be induced to accept anything; and how he supported existence remained as great a mystery as ever to his best friends. To ask him if he knows anything, to doubt the imagination of Bompard, is to show a fine simplicity of soul!

"Yes, gentlemen, and somethink vary serious."

"What is it?"

"The Marshal has just been shot at." For one moment consternation reigns; the young men look at each other. Then Lappara stretches himself in his chair and asks languidly:

"How about your asphalt affair, old man — how is it getting on?"

"*Vai!* the asphalt — I have something much better than that."

Not at all surprised that his news of the attempted assassination of the Marshal had produced so little effect, he now proceeded to unfold to them his new scheme. A wonderful thing, and so simple! It was to scoop the prizes of one hundred and twenty thousand francs that the Swiss governments offers yearly at the Federal shooting-matches. He had been a crack shot at larks in his day; with a little practice he could easily get

his hand in again and secure a hundred and twenty thousand francs annually to the end of his life. Such an easy way to do it, *au moins!* Traversing Switzerland by short marches, going slowly, from canton to canton, rifle on *showlder.*

The man of schemes grew warm with his subject, climbed mountains, crossed glaciers, descended vales and torrents and shook down avalanches before his astonished young listeners. Of all the imaginings of that disordered brain this was certainly the most astonishing, delivered with an air of perfect conviction, with a fire and flame that, burning inwardly, covered his brow with corrugated wrinkles.

His ravings were only hushed by the breathless arrival of Méjean, who came rushing in much excited:

"Great news!" he said throwing his bag upon the table. "The Ministry is fallen!"

"It can't be possible!"

"Roumestan takes the Ministry of Public Instruction. . . ."

"I knew that," said Bompard; and as they smiled, he added: "*Par-fait-emain*, gentlemen! I was there; I have just come from there."

"And you did n't mention it before!"

"Why should I? No one ever believes me. I think it is my *agsent*," he added resignedly and with a candid air, the fun of which was lost in the prevailing excitement.

Roumestan a Cabinet Minister!

"Ah, my boys, what a shifty, smart fellow the

chief is!" Lappara kept saying, throwing himself back in his chair with his legs near the ceiling. "Has n't he played his cards well!"

Rochemaure looked up indignant:

"Don't talk of smartness and shiftiness, my friend; Roumestan is conscientiousness itself. He goes straight ahead like a bullet—"

"In the first place, there are no bullets nowadays, my child—only shells; and shells do this—" and with the tip of his boot he indicated the curving course of a trajectory:

"Scandal-monger!"

"Idiot!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!"

Méjean wondered to himself over this extraordinary man Roumestan, this complicated nature whom even those who knew him most intimately could judge so differently.

"A shifty fellow!—conscientiousness itself!"

The public judged of him in the same double way. He who knew him thoroughly was conscious of the shallowness and indolence that modified his tireless ambition and made him at the same time better and worse than his reputation. But was it really true, this news of his Ministerial portfolio? Anxious to know the truth, Méjean glanced in the glass to see if he was in proper shape, and, stepping across the hall, entered the apartments of Mme. Roumestan.

From the antechamber where the footmen waited with their ladies' wraps could be heard the hum of many voices deadened by the heavy, luxurious

hangings and high ceilings. Rosalie generally received in her little drawing-room, furnished as a winter garden with cane seats and pretty little tables, the light just filtering in between the green leaves of the plants that filled the windows. That had always sufficed her in her lowly position as a simple lady overshadowed by her husband's greatness, perfectly without social ambition and passing among those who did not know her superiority for a good-enough person of no great importance. But to-day the two large drawing-rooms were humming and crowded to overflowing; new people were constantly arriving, friends to the remotest degree, even to the slightest acquaintanceship, people to whose faces it would have puzzled Rosalie to attach a name.

Dressed very simply in a gown of violet, most becoming to her slender figure and the whole harmonious personality of her being, she received every one alike with her gentle little smile, her manner somewhat haughty — her *réfréjon*, or "uppish" air, as Aunt Portal had once expressed it. Not the slightest elation at her new position — rather a little surprise and uneasiness, but her feelings kept well concealed!

She went from group to group as the daylight faded rapidly in the lower story of the city house and the servants brought lamps and lighted the candles. The rooms assumed their festal air as at their evening receptions, the rich shining hangings and oriental rugs and tapestries glittering like colored stones in the light.

"Ah, Monsieur Méjean!" and Rosalie came up to him, glad to feel an intimate friend near her in this crowd of strangers. They understood each other perfectly. This Southerner who had learned to be cool and the emotional Parisian had similar ways of seeing and judging things, and together they acted as counterweights to the weaknesses and extravagances of Numa.

"I came in to see if the news were true. But there is no doubt about it," said he, glancing at the crowded rooms. She handed him the telegram she had received from her husband and said in a low voice:

"What do you think of it?"

"It is a great responsibility, but you will be there."

"And you too," she answered, pressing his hand, and then turned away to meet other newcomers.

The fact was that more people kept arriving but no one went away. They were waiting for Roumestan; they wished to hear all the particulars of the affair from his own lips — how with one lift of his shoulder he had managed to upset them all. Some of the new arrivals who had just come from the Chamber were already bringing with them bits of news and scraps of conversations. Every one crowded about them in pleasurable excitement. The women especially were wildly interested. Under the big hats which came into fashion that winter their pretty cheeks flushed with that fine rosy tint, that fever one sees in the

players round the tables at the gambling house at Monte Carlo. The fashion of hats this year was a revival of the days of the Fronde, soft felt hats with long feathers; perhaps it was this that made their wearers so interested in politics. But all these ladies appeared well up in such matters; they talked in purest parliamentary language, emphasizing their remarks with blows from their little muffs; all of them sang the praises of the leader. In fact this exclamation could be heard on every side: "What a man! what a man!"

In a corner sat old Béchut, a professor at the Collège de France, a very ugly man all nose — an immense scientist's nose that seemed to have elongated itself from poking into books. He was taking the success of Roumestan as the text for one of his favorite theories — that all the weakness in the modern world comes from the too prominent place in it given to women and children. Ignorance and toilets, caprice and brainlessness! "You see, sir, that is where Roumestan is so strong! He has no children and he has known how to escape the influence of woman. So he has followed one straight, firm path; no turning aside, no deviation!" The solemn personage whom he was addressing, councillor at the Court of Cassation, a simple-looking, round-headed little man whose ideas rattled about in his empty skull like corn in a gourd, drew himself up approvingly in a magisterial way, as who should say: "I also am a superior man, sir! I also have escaped from the influences to which you refer."

Seeing that people were listening, the professor spoke louder and cited the great names of history, Cæsar, Richelieu, Frederick, Napoleon, scientifically proving at the same time that in the scale of thinking creatures woman was on a much lower grade than man. "And, as a matter of fact, if we examine the cellular tissues . . ."

But what was much more amusing to examine was the expression on the faces of the wives of these two gentlemen, who were sitting side by side, all attention, taking a cup of tea — which genial meal, with its goodies hot from the oven, its steaming samovar and rattle of spoons on costly china, was just being served to the guests. The younger lady, Mme. de Boë, had made of her gourd-headed husband, a used-up nobleman with nothing but debts, a magistrate in the Court of Cassation through the influence of her family; people shuddered to think of this spendthrift, who had quickly wasted all his wife's fortune and his own, having the public moneys in his control. Mme. Béchut, a former beauty and still beautiful, with long-lidded, intelligent eyes and delicate features, showed only by a contraction of her mouth that she had been at war with the world for years and was consumed with a tireless and unscrupulous ambition. Her sole effort had been to push into the front rank her very commonplace professor. By means that unfortunately were only too well known she had compelled the doors of the Institute and the Collège de France to open to him. There was a whole world of meaning in the grim smile that

these two women exchanged over their teacups — and perhaps, if one were to search carefully among the gentlemen, there were a good many other men in the throng who had not been exactly injured by feminine influence.

Suddenly Roumestan appeared. Disregarding the shouts of welcome and congratulations of the guests, he crossed the room quickly, went straight to his wife and kissed her on both cheeks before she could prevent this rather trying demonstration before the public. But what could have better disproved the assertion of the professor? All the ladies cried "bravo!" Much hand-shaking and embracing ensued and then an attentive silence as Numa, leaning against the chimney-piece, began to relate briefly the results of the day.

The great blow arranged a week ago to be struck to-day, the plots and counter-plots, the wild rage of the Left at its defeat, his own overwhelming triumph, his rush to the tribune, even to the very intonation he had used to the Marshal when he replied: "That depends on you, Mr. President" — he told everything, forgot nothing, with a gayety and warmth that were contagious.

Then, becoming grave, he enumerated the great responsibilities of his position; the reform of the University with its crowd of youths to be brought up hoping for the realization of better things — this allusion was understood and greeted with loud applause; but he meant to surround himself with enlightened men, to beg for the good will and devotion of all. With moist eyes he

mustered the groups about him. "I call on you, friend Béchut, and you, my dear De Boë —"

They were all so in earnest that no one stopped to ask in what manner the dull wits of the councillor at the Court of Cassation could aid in the reform of the University. But then the number of persons of that sort whom Roumestan had urged that afternoon to aid him in his tremendous duties of the Public Instruction was really incalculable. As regards the fine arts, however, he felt more at ease, so he said; there they would not refuse help! A flattering murmur of laughter and exclamations stopped his further words.

As to that department there was but one voice in all Paris, even among his worst enemies — Numa was the man for the work. Now at last there would be a jury for art, a lyric theatre, an official art! But the Minister cut these dithyrambics off and remarked in a gay and familiar tone that the new Cabinet was composed almost exclusively of Southerners. Out of eight members Provence, Bordeaux, Périgord and Languedoc had supplied six; and then, growing excited: "Aha, the South is climbing, the South is climbing! Paris is ours. We have everything. It rests with you, gentlemen, to profit by it. For the second time the Latins have conquered Gaul!"

He looked indeed like a Latin of the conquest, his head like a medallion with broad flat surfaces on the cheeks, with his dark complexion and unceremonious ways, his carelessness, so out of place in this Parisian drawing-room. In the midst

of the cheers and laughter greeting his last speech Numa, always a good actor, knowing well how to leave as soon as he had shot his bolt, suddenly quitted the fireplace and signing to Méjean to follow him passed from the room by one of the smaller doors, leaving Rosalie to make his excuses for him. He was to dine at Versailles with the Marshal; he had hardly the time to dress and sign a few papers.

"Come and help me dress," said he to a servant who was laying the table with three plates, for Roumestan, Madame and Bompard, around that basket of flowers which Rosalie had fresh at every meal. He felt a thrill of delight that he was not to dine there; the tumult of enthusiasm that he had left behind him in the drawing-room excited in him the desire for more gayety and more brilliant company. Besides, a Southerner is never a domestic man. The Northern nations alone have invented to meet their wretched climate the word "home," that intimate family circle to which the Provençal and the Italian prefer the gardens of cafés and the noise and excitement of the streets.

Between the dining-room and the office was a small reception room, usually full of people at this hour, anxiously watching the clock and looking abstractedly at the illustrated papers, but quite preoccupied by their legal woes. Méjean had sent them all away to-day, for he did not think Numa could attend to them. One, however, had refused to go: a big fellow in ready-made garments and awkward as a corporal in citizen's dress.

"Ah, God be with ye, Monsieur Roumestan; how are things? I have been hoping so long that you would come!"

The accent, the swarthy face, that jaunty air — Numa had seen them somewhere before, but where?

"You have forgotten me?" said the stranger. "Valmajour, the taborist."

"Oh yes, yes, of course."

He was about to pass on, but Valmajour planted himself before him and informed him that he had arrived the day before yesterday. "I could n't get here before, because when one moves a whole family, it takes a little time to get installed."

"A whole family?" said Numa with bulging eyes.

"*Bé!* yes; my father and my sister. We have done as you advised."

Roumestan looked distressed and embarrassed, as he always did when called upon to redeem notes like this or fulfil a promise, lightly given in order to make himself agreeable, but with little idea of future acceptance. Dear me, he was only too glad to be of use to Valmajour! He would consider it and see what he could do. But this evening he was very much hurried — exceptional circumstances — the invitation of the President. But as the peasant made no sign of going: "Come in here," said he, and they went into the study.

As Numa sat at his desk reading over and signing several papers Valmajour glanced about the handsome room, richly furnished and carpeted, with

book-shelves covering all the walls, surmounted by bronzes, busts and works of art, reminiscences each one of glorious causes—a portrait of the king signed by his own royal hand. And he was much impressed by the solemnity of it all — the stiffness of the carved chairs, the rows of books, above all the presence of the servant, correct in his severe black costume, coming and going and arranging quickly on chairs his master's evening clothes and immaculate linen. But over there in the light of the lamps the big kind face and familiar profile of Roumestan that he knew so well reassured him. His letters finished, Roumestan began to dress, and while the servant drew off his master's trousers and shoes he asked Valmajour questions and learned to his dismay that before leaving home they had sold everything that they owned in the world — mulberry-trees, vineyards, farm, everything!

"You sold your farm, foolish fellow?"

"Well, my sister was somewhat afraid, but my father and I insisted upon it. I said to them, 'What risk is it when we are going to Numa and when he is getting us to come?'"

It needed all the taborist's naïveté to dare talk in that free and easy way before a Minister. It was not Valmajour's simplicity that struck Numa most; it was the thought of the great crowd of enemies that he had made for himself by this incorrigible mania for promises. Now I ask you —what need was there to go and disturb the quiet life of these poor people? and he went over in his memory all the details of his visit to Mount

Cordova, the scruples of the peasant girl and the pains that he took to overcome them. What for? what devil tempted him? He, this peasant, was dreadful. And as to his talent, he did not remember much about it, concerned as he was at having this whole family on his shoulders. He knew beforehand how his wife would reproach him — remembered her cold look as she said: "Still, words must mean *something!*" And now, in his new position at the source and spring of favors, what a lot of trouble he was going to create for himself as a result of his own fatal benevolence!

But the gladsome thought that he was a Minister and the consciousness of his power restored his spirits almost at once. On such pinnacles as his, why should such small things worry him? Master of all the fine arts, with all the theatres and places of amusement under his thumb, it would be a trifle to make the fortune of these luckless people. Restored to his own self-complacency, he changed his tone and in order to keep the peasant in his place told him solemnly and from a lofty place to what important distinction he had been that day appointed. Unhappily he was at that moment only half dressed, his feet in silk stockings rested on the floor and his portly form was arrayed in white flannel underclothes trimmed with pink ribbons. Valmajour could not connect the word "Minister" in his mind with a fat man in his shirt-sleeves, so he continued to call him *Moussu* Numa, to talk to him about his own "music" and the

new songs that he had learned. Ah, he feared no tabor-player in all Paris now!

"Listen, I will show you."

He flew toward the next room to get his tabor but Roumestan stopped him.

"I tell you I am in a great hurry, deuce take you!"

"All right, all right, another time then," said the peasant good-naturedly.

And seeing Méjean approaching he thought it necessary to begin to tell him the story of the fife with three stops.

"It come to me right in the middle of the night, listening to the singing of the nightingoyle; thought I to meself: 'How is it, Valmajour—'"

It was the same little story that he had told them in the amphitheatre: having found it successful, he cleverly clung to it, repeating it word for word. But this time his manner became less assured, a certain embarrassment gaining from moment to moment as Roumestan finished his toilet and stood before him in all the severity of his black evening clothes and enormous shirt-front of fine linen with its studs of Oriental pearls, which the valet handed him piece by piece.

Moussu Numa seemed to him to have grown taller, his head, held stiffly, solemnly, for fear of disarranging his immaculate white muslin tie, seemed lighted up by the pale beams radiating from the cross of Saint Anne around his neck and the big order of Isabella the Catholic, like a sun, pinned upon his breast. And suddenly the peas-

ant, seized by a wave of respect and fright, realized that he stood in the presence of one of those privileged beings of the earth, that strange, almost superhuman creature, the powerful god to whom the prayers and desires and supplications of his worshippers are sent only on large stamped paper, so high up, indeed, that humbler devotees are never privileged to see him, so haughty that they only whisper his name with fear and trembling, in a sort of restrained fear and ignorant emphasis — the Minister!

Poor Valmajour! He was so upset by this idea that he hardly heard Roumestan's kind words of farewell, asking him to come again in a fortnight when he would be installed in his new quarters at the Ministry.

"All right, all right, your Excellency."

He backed towards the door, still dazzled by the orders and extraordinary expression of his transfigured compatriot. Numa was delighted at this sudden timidity, which was a tribute to what he henceforward called his "ministerial air," his curling lip, his frowning brow and his severe, reserved manner.

A few moments later his Excellency was rolling towards the railway station, forgetting this tiresome episode and lulled by the gentle motion of the coupé with its bright lamps as he flew to meet his new and exalted engagements. He was already preparing the telling points in his first speech, composing his plan of campaign, his famous letter to the rectors and thinking of the excite-

ment caused all over Europe when they should read his nomination in to-morrow's papers, when, at the turn of the boulevard, in the light of a gas-lamp reflected in the wet asphalt, he caught sight of the taborist, his tabor hanging from his arm, deafened and frightened, waiting for an opportunity to cross the street which was at that hour, as all Paris hastened to re-enter its gates, a moving mass of carriages and wagons, while crowded omnibuses jolted swaying along and the horns of the tramway conductors sounded at intervals. In the falling shades of night and the steam of dampness which the rain threw up from the hurrying crowd, in this great jostling crowd the poor boy seemed so lost, exiled and overwhelmed by the tall, unfriendly buildings around him — he seemed so pitifully unlike the handsome Valmajour at the door of his *mas*, giving the rhythm to the locusts with his tabor, that Roumestan turned away his head and, for a few moments, a feeling of remorse threw a cloud over the radiant pathway of his triumph.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSAGE DU SAUMON.

WHILE awaiting a more complete settling than was possible before the arrival of their furniture, which was coming by slow freight, the Valmajours had taken rooms temporarily at the famous Passage du Saumon, where from time immemorial teachers from Aps and its district have stopped, and of which Aunt Portal still retained such astonishing recollections. There, up under the roof, they had two small rooms, one of which was without light or air, a kind of wood-closet which was occupied by the men; the other was not much larger but seemed to them fine in comparison, with its worm-pierced black walnut furniture, its moth-eaten ragged carpet on the worn wooden floor and the dormer windows that let in only a bit of a sky as lowering and yellow as the long donkey-backed skylight over the Passage.

In these poor quarters they kept up the memory of home with a strong smell of garlic and fried onions, which foreign food they cooked for themselves on a little stove. Old Valmajour, who loved good eating and was also fond of company, would have liked to dine at the hotel table, where the white linen and plated salt-cellars and service seemed very handsome to him, and also to have

joined in the noisy conversations and mingled with shouts of laughter of the commercial gentlemen who at meal times filled the house to the very top floor with their noise and jollity. But Audiberte opposed this flatly.

Amazed not to find at once on their arrival the promises of Numa fulfilled and the two hundred francs an evening which had filled her little head with piles of money ever since the visit of the Parisians; horrified at the high price of everything, from the first day she had been seized with the craze that the Parisians call "fear of wanting." For herself she could get along with anchovies and olives as in Lent — *té, pardi !* but her men were perfect wolves, worse than in their own country because it is colder in Paris, and she was obliged to be constantly opening her *saquette*, a large calico pocket made by her own hands, in which she carried the three thousand francs that they had received for their farm and chattels.

Each coin that she spent was a struggle, a pang, as if she were handing over the stones of her farmhouse or the last vines of her vineyard. Her peasant greed and her suspiciousness, that fear of being cheated by a tenant which caused her to sell her farm instead of letting it, were redoubled in this gloomy, unknown Paris, this city which from her garret she heard roaring with a sound that did not cease day or night at this noisy corner of the city market, causing the glasses near the hotel water-bottle on the table to rattle at every hour.

No traveller lost in a wood of sinister repute

ever clung more convulsively to his baggage than did Audiberte to her *saquette* as she walked through the streets in her green skirt and her Arles head-dress, which the passers-by turned to stare at. When she entered a shop with her countrywoman's gait, the way she had of calling things by a lot of outlandish names, saying *api* for celery, *mérinjanes* for aubergines, made her, a woman from the south of France, as much a stranger in her country's capital as if she had been a Russian from Nijni Novgorod or a Swede from Stockholm.

Sweet and humble of manner at first, if she detected a smile on the face of a clerk or received a rough answer on account of her mania for bargaining, she would suddenly fly into a gust of rage; her pretty virginal brown face twitching with frantic gesticulations she would pour forth a torrent of noisy, vainglorious words. Then she would tell about the expected legacy from Cousin Puyfourcat, the two hundred francs a night to be earned by her brother, the friendship that Roumestan had for them—sometimes calling him Numa, sometimes the *Menister*—all this with an emphasis more grotesque than her familiarity. Everything was jumbled together in a flood of gibberish composed of the *langue d'oil* tinged with French.

Then her habitual caution would return to her; she would fear that she had talked imprudently, and, seized by a superstitious terror at her own gossip, she would stop, suddenly mute, and close her lips as tightly as the strings of her *saquette*.

At the end of a week she had become a legendary character in the quarter of the Rue Montmartre, a street of shops where, at their ever-open doors, the vendors of meats, green-groceries and colonial wares discussed the affairs and secrets of all the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The constant teasing of these people, the saucy questions with which they plied her as she made her frugal purchases each morning — as to why her brother's appearance was delayed and when the legacy was coming from the Arab — all these insults to her self-respect, more than the fear of poverty staring them in the face, exasperated Audiberte against Numa, against those promises which at first she had suspected, true child of the South that she was, knowing well that the promises of her country-people down South vanish easier than those of other folks — all because of the lightness of the air.

"Oh, if we had only made him sign a paper!"

This idea became a fixture in her mind and she felt daily in her brother's pockets for the stamped document when Valmajour set out for the Ministry, in order to be sure it was there.

But Roumestan was engaged in signing another kind of paper and had many things to think of more important than the taborist. He was settling down in his new office with the generous ardor and enthusiasm, with the fever of a man who comes to his own. Everything was a novelty to him — the enormous rooms of the Ministry as well as the large ideas necessitated by his position.

To arrive at the top, to "reconquer Gaul," as he had said, that was not so difficult; but to sustain himself satisfactorily, to justify his elevation by intelligent reforms and attempts at progress! Full of zeal, he studied, questioned, consulted, literally surrounded himself with shining lights. With Béchut, that great professor, he studied the evils of the college system and the means to extirpate the spirit of free-thinking in the schools. He employed the experience of his chief in the fine arts, M. de la Calmette, who had behind him twenty-nine years of office, and of Cadaillac, the manager of the grand opera, who was still erect after three failures, in order to remodel the Conservatory, the Salon and the Academy of Music in accordance with brand-new plans.

The trouble was that he never listened to these counsellors, but talked himself for hours at a time and then, suddenly glancing at his watch, would rise and hastily dismiss them: "Bad luck to it— I had forgotten the council meeting! What a life, not a moment to oneself! I understand— just send me your memorial right off!"

Memorials were piling up on Méjean's desk, who, notwithstanding his good intentions and intelligence, had none too much time for current work and so permitted these grand reforms to slumber in their dust. Like all Ministers when they arrive at a portfolio, Roumestan had brought with him all his clerks from the Rue Scribe—Baron de Lappara and Viscount de Rochemaure, who gave a flavor of aristocracy to the new Ministry, but

who were otherwise perfectly incompetent and ignorant of their duties.

The first time that Valmajour came there he was received by Lappara, who occupied himself by preference with the fine arts and whose duties consisted principally in sending invitations in large official envelopes at all hours by staff officers, dragoons or cuirassiers to the young ladies of the minor theatres, asking them to supper. Sometimes the envelope was empty, being merely a pretext to display in front of the lady's door that reassuring orderly from the Ministry the day before some debt came due.

Lappara received him with a kindly, easy air, a bit top-loftical, like that of a feudal lord receiving one of his vassals. His legs outstretched, so as not to crease his gray-blue trousers, he talked mincingly without stopping a moment the polishing of his nails.

"Not easy just now — the Minister is busy — perhaps in a few days. We 'll let you know, my good fellow!"

And when in his simplicity the musician ventured to say that his matter was somewhat urgent, that they only had enough for a short time left, the baron, carefully placing his file upon the edge of the desk with his most serious air, suggested to him to have a crank attached to his tabor.

"A crank attached to my tabor? — for what purpose?"

"Why, my dear fellow, so as to use it as a box for *plaisirs* (cakes) while you are out of work."

The next time Valmajour came to see Roumestan he was received by Rochemaure. The viscount raised his head of hair frizzed with hot irons from the dusty ledger over which he was bending and in his conscientious manner asked to have the mechanism of the fife explained to him, took notes, tried to understand and said finally that he was not there for art matters, but more especially for religious questions.

After that the unhappy peasant never could find any one — they had all betaken themselves to that inaccessible retreat where His Excellency had hidden himself. Still he did not lose calmness or heart and always responded to the evasive answers and shrugging shoulders of the attendants with the surprised but steady look and shrewd half-smile peculiar to the Provençal.

"All right, I will come again."

And he did come again. But for his high gaiters and the tabor hanging on his arm, he might have been taken for an employee of the house, he came so regularly. But each time he came it was harder than the last.

Now the mere sight of the great arched door made his heart beat. Beyond the arch was the old Hôtel Augereau with its large courtyard where they were already stacking wood for the winter and the double staircase so hard to ascend under the mocking gaze of the servants. Everything combined to harass him — the silver chains of the porters, the gold-laced caps, the endless gorgeous things that made him feel the distance that sepa-

rated him from his patron. But he dreaded more than all this the dreadful scenes that he went through at home, the terrible frowning brows of Audiberte; that is why he still desperately insisted on coming. At last the hall porter took pity upon him and gave him the advice to waylay the Minister at the Saint-Lazare station when he was going down to Versailles.

He took his advice and did sentry work in the big lively waiting room on the first story at the hour of the Parliament train when it took on a very special look of its own. Deputies, senators, journalists, members of the Left, of the Right and all the parties jostled each other there, forming as variegated a throng as the blue, red and green placards that covered the walls. They watched each other, talked, screamed, whispered, some sitting apart rehearsing their next speech, others, the orators of the lobbies, making the windows rattle with loud voices that the Chamber was never destined to hear. Northern accents and Southern accents, divers opinions and sentiments, swarming ambitions and intrigues, the noisy tramp of the restless crowd — this waiting-room with its delays and uncertainties was an appropriate theatre for politics, this tumult of a journey at a fixed hour which would soon, at bid of the whistle, be speeding over the rails down a perspective of tracks, disks and locomotives, over a country full of accidents and surprises.

Five minutes later he saw Numa enter, leaning on the arm of one of his secretaries who carried

his portfolio. His coat was flung open, his face beaming just as he had looked that day on the platform in the amphitheatre and at a distance he recognized the facile voice, the warm words, his protestations of friendship: "Count on me, — put yourself in my hands, — it is as good as granted. . . ."

The Minister just then was in the honey-moon of prosperity. Except for political enmities — not always as bitter as they are supposed to be, simply the result of rivalry between public speakers or quarrels of lawyers on opposite sides of a case — Numa had no enemies, not having been in power long enough to discourage those who sought his services. His credit was still good. Only a few had begun to be impatient and dog his footsteps. To these he threw a loud, hasty "How are you, friend?" that anticipated their reproaches and in a way denied their arguments, while his familiar manner flattered the baffled office-seekers and yet kept their demands at a distance. It was a great idea, was this "How are you?" It sprang from instinctive duplicity.

At sight of Valmajour, who came swinging towards him, his smile showing his white teeth, Numa felt inclined to throw him his fatal, careless "How are you, friend?" — but how could he treat this peasant lad in a little felt hat as a friend as he stood there in his gray jacket, from the sleeves of which his brown hands protruded like those in a cheap village photograph? He preferred to pass him by without a word, with his

"Ministerial air," leaving the poor boy amazed, crushed and knocked about by the crowd that was following the great man. Still Valmajour returned to his station the next day and several days thereafter, but he did not dare approach the Minister; he sat on the edge of a bench with that touching air of sorrowful resignation that one so often sees in a railway station on the faces of soldiers and emigrants, who are going to a strange country, prepared to meet all the chances of their evil destiny.

Roumestan could not evade that silent figure on his path with its dumb appeal. He might pretend not to see it, turn aside his glance, talk louder as he passed; the smile on his victim's face was there and remained there until the train had gone. Of a certainty he would have preferred a noisy demand and a row, when he could have called a policeman and given the disturber of his complacency in charge and so got rid of him. He, the Minister, went so far as to take a different station on the left bank of the Seine to avoid this trouble of his conscience. Thus in many instances is the greatest man's life made wretched by some little thing of no account, like a pebble in the seven-league boots.

But Valmajour would not despair.

"He must be ill," he said to himself and stuck obstinately to his post. At home his sister watched for his coming in a fever of impatience.

"Well, *bé!* have you seen the Menister? Has he signed that paper?"

His eternal "No, not yet!" exasperated her,

but more his calmness as he threw into a corner his tabor whose strap left a dent on his shoulder — it was the calmness of indolence and shiftlessness, as common as vivacity among Southern nations. Then the queer little creature would fall into one of her furious fits. What had he in his veins in place of blood? — was there to be no end to this? — "Look out, or I will attend to it myself!" Very calm, he made no answer, but let the storm blow over, took his instruments from their cases, his fife and mouth-piece with its ivory tip, and rubbed them well with a bit of cloth for fear of dampness and promised to try at the Ministry again to-morrow, and, if he could not see Numa, ask to see Mme. Roumestan.

"O, *vaï!* Mme. Roumestan! You know she does not like your music — but the young lady, though — she will be sure to help you; yes indeed!" And she tossed her head.

"Madame or Mademoiselle, they don't either of them care anything about you," said the old man, who was cowering over a turf fire that his daughter had economically covered with ashes, a fire about which they were eternally quarrelling.

In the bottom of his heart the old man was not displeased at his son's want of success, from professional jealousy. All these complications and the uprooting of their lives had been most welcome to the Bohemian tastes of the old wandering minstrel; he was delighted at first with the journey and the idea of seeing Paris, that "Paradise of females and purgatory of hosses," as the carters

of his country put it, imagining that in Paris one would see women like houris arrayed in transparent garments and horses distorted, leaping about in the midst of flames.

Instead he had found cold, privations and rain. From fear of Audiberte and respect for Roumestan he had contented himself with grumbling and shivering in a corner, only an occasional word or wink hinting at his dissatisfaction. But Numa's treachery and his daughter's fits of wrath gave him also an excuse for opening hostilities. He revenged himself for all the blows to his vanity that his son's musical proficiency had inflicted on him for ten years and shrugged his shoulders as he heard him trying his fife.

"Music, music, oh, yes — much good your music is going to do you!"

And then in a loud voice he asked if it was n't a sin to bring an old man like him so far — into this *Sibelia*, this wilderness, to let him perish of cold and hunger. He called on the memory of his sainted wife, whom, by the way, he had killed with unhappiness — "made a goat of her," as Audiberte put it. He would whine for hours at a time, his head in the fire, red-faced and sullen, until his daughter, wearied with his lamentations, gave him a few pennies and sent him out to get a glass of country wine for himself. In the wine-shop his sorrows fled away. It was comfortable by the roaring stove; in the warmth the old wretch soon recovered his low vein of an actor in Italian comedy, which his grotesque figure, big

nose and thin lips made more apparent, taken in connection with his little wiry body, like Punch in the show.

He was soon the delight of the customers in the wine-shop with his buffooneries and his boasting. He jeered his son's tabor and told them how much trouble it gave them at the hotel; for in order to be ready for his coming out Valmajour, kept at tension by the delay of hopes, persisted in practising up to midnight; but the other tenants objected to the continual thunder of the tabor and the ear-piercing cry of the fife — the very stairs shook with the sound, as if an engine were in motion on the fifth floor.

"Go ahead," Audiberte would say to her brother when the proprietor came to them with complaints. It was pretty queer if one had n't the right to make music in this Paris that makes so much noise one cannot sleep at night! So he continued to practise. Then the proprietor demanded their rooms. But when they left the Passage du Saumon, the hostelry so well known in their native province, one that recalled their native land, they felt as if their exile were heavier to bear and that they had journeyed still a bit farther North.

The night before they left, after another long, unfruitful journey taken by Valmajour, Audiberte hurried her men through dinner without speaking a word, but with the light of firm resolution shining in her eyes. When it was over she threw her long brown cloak over her shoulders and went out, leaving the washing of the dishes to the men.

"Two months, almost two months since we came to Paris," she muttered through her clenched teeth. "I 've had enough, I am going to speak to this Menister myself — "

She arranged the ribbon of her head-dress, that, perched over her wavy hair in high bows, stood up like a helmet, and rushed violently from the room, her well-blacked boot-heels kicking at every step the heavy material of her gown. Father and son stared at each other alarmed, but did not dare to restrain her; they knew that any interference would but exasperate her anger. They passed the afternoon alone together, hardly speaking as the rain battered against the windows, the one polishing his bag and fife, the other cooking the stew for supper over a good, big fire that he took advantage of Audiberte's absence to kindle, and over which he was for once getting thoroughly warm.

Finally her quick steps, the short steps of a dwarf, were heard in the corridor. She entered beaming.

"Too bad our windows do not look out upon the street," she said, removing her cloak, which was perfectly dry. "You might have seen the beautiful carriage in which I came home."

"A carriage! you are joking!"

"*And* two servants, *and* liveries — it is making a great stir in the hotel!"

Then in a wondering silence she described and acted out her adventure. In the first place and to start with — instead of going to the Minister,

who would not have received her, she found out the address — one can get anything if one talks politely — of the sister of Mme. Roumestan, the tall young lady who came to see them at Valmajour. She did not live at the Ministry but with her parents in a quarter full of little, badly-paved streets that smelt of drugs and reminded Audiberte of her own province. It was ever so far away and she was obliged to walk. She found the place at last in a little square surrounded with arcades like the *placette* at Aps.

The dear young lady — how well she had received her, without any haughtiness, although everything looked very rich and handsome in the house, much gilding, and many silken curtains hung round on this side and that, in every direction:

"Ah, God be with you! So you have come to Paris? Where from? Since when?"

Then, when she heard how Numa had disappointed them, she rang for her governess, she too a lady in a bonnet, and all three set off for the Ministry. It was something to see the bows and reverences made to them by all those old beadles who ran ahead of them to open the doors.

"So you have seen him, then, the Minister?" timidly ventured Valmajour as his sister stopped to breathe.

"Seen him! I certainly have; what did I tell you, you poor *bédigas* (calf), that you must get the young lady on your side! She arranged the whole thing in no time. There is to be a great musical function next week at the Minister's and

you are to play before the directors of the Conservatory of Music. And after that, *cra-cra!* the contract drawn up and signed!"

But the best of all was that the young lady had driven her home in the carriage of the Minister.

"And she was very anxious to come upstairs with me," added the peasant girl, winking at her father and distorting her pretty face with a meaning grimace. The father's old face, with its complexion like a dried fig, wrinkled up in a look of slyness which meant: "I understand; not a word!" He no longer taunted the taborist. Valmajour himself, very quiet, did not understand his sister's perfidious meaning; he could think only of his coming appearance, and, taking down his instruments, he passed all his pieces in review, sending the notes as a farewell all over the house and down the glass-covered passage in floods of trills on rolling cadences.

CHAPTER VIII.

RENEWAL OF YOUTH.

THE Minister and his wife had finished breakfast in their dining-room on the first floor, a room much too big and showy, that never could be thoroughly thawed out, even with heavy curtains and the heat of a furnace that warmed the whole house, and the steam from the hot dishes of a copious repast. By some chance that morning they were alone together. On the table amidst the dessert, always a great feature in the Southerner's meal, lay a box of cigars and a cup of vervain, which is the tea of the Provençal, and large boxes filled with cards of invitation to a series of concerts to be given by the Minister. They were addressed to senators, deputies, clergymen, professors, academicians, people of society — all the motley crowd that is generally bidden to public receptions; and some larger boxes for the cards to the privileged guests asked to the first series of "little concerts."

Mme. Roumestan was running them over, occasionally pausing at some name, watched by her husband out of the corner of his eye as he pretended to be absorbed in selecting a cigar, while really his furtive glance was noting the disappro-

bation and reserve on her quiet face at the promiscuous way this first batch of invitations had been selected.

But Rosalie asked no questions; all these preparations did not interest her. Since their installation at the Ministry she had felt herself farther off than ever from her husband, separated by his many engagements, too many guests and a public way of living that had destroyed all intimacy. To this was added the ever-bitter sorrow of childlessness; never to hear about her the pattering of tireless little feet, nor any of those peals of baby laughter that would have banished from their dining-room that icy look as if a hotel where they were stopping for a day or two, with its impersonal air on table-cloth, furniture, silver and all the sumptuous things to be found in any public place.

In the embarrassing silence could be heard the distant sound of hammers interspersed with music and singing. The musicians were rehearsing, while carpenters were busy putting up and hanging the stage on which the concert was to take place. The door opened; Méjean entered, his hands full of papers.

"Still more petitions!"

Roumestan flew into a rage: No, it was really too bad! — if it were the Pope himself there would be no place to give him. Méjean calmly placed before him the heap of letters, cards and scented notes:

"It is very difficult to refuse — you promised them, you know —"

"I promised? I have n't spoken to one of them!"

"Listen a moment: 'My dear Minister — I beg to remind you of your kind speech,' and this one, 'The General informs me that you were so kind as to offer him,' and this, 'Reminding the Minister of his promise.'"

"I must be a somnambulist, then!" said Roumestan in astonishment.

The fact was that as soon as the day for the concert was decided upon Numa had said to every one whom he met in the Senate or Chamber: "I count on you for the 10th, you know," and as he added "Quite a private affair," no one had failed to accept the flattering invitation.

Embarrassed at being caught in the act by his wife, he vented his irritability upon her as usual.

"It 's the fault of your sister with her taborist. What need have I of all this fuss? I did not intend to give our concerts until much later — but that girl, such an impatient little person! 'No, no, right away;' and you were in as much of a hurry as she was! *L'azé me fiche* if I don't believe this taborist has turned your heads."

"O no, not mine," answered Rosalie gayly. "Indeed I am dreadfully afraid that this foreign music may not be understood by the Parisians. We ought to have brought the atmosphere of Provence, the costumes, the farandole — but first of all," she added seriously, "it is necessary that you must keep your promise."

"Promise, promise? It will be impossible to talk at all very soon!"

Turning towards his secretary, who was smiling, he added:

"By Jove, all Southerners are not like you, Méjean, cold and calculating and taciturn. You are a false one, a renegade Southerner, a *Franciot*, as they say with us. A Southerner? — you? A man who has never lied and who does not like vervain tea!" he added with a comically indignant tone.

"I am not so *franciot* as I seem, sir," answered Méjean calmly. "When I first came to Paris twenty years ago I was a terrible Southerner — impudence, gesticulations, assurance — as talkative and inventive as — "

"As Bompard," prompted Roumestan, who never liked other people to ridicule his dearest friend, but did not deny himself the privilege.

"Yes, really, almost as bad as Bompard. A kind of instinct urged me never to tell the truth. One day I began to feel ashamed of this and resolved to correct it. Outward exaggeration could be mastered at least by speaking in a low voice and keeping my arms pressed tightly against my sides; but the inward — the boiling, bubbling torrent — that was more difficult. Then I made an heroic resolution. Every time I caught myself in an untruth I punished myself by not speaking for the rest of the day; that is how I was able to reform my nature. Nevertheless the instinct is there under all my coolness. Sometimes

I have broken off short in the middle of a sentence — it is n't the words I lack, quite the contrary — I hold myself in check because I feel that I am going to lie."

"The terrible South — there is no way of escaping from it!" said the genial Numa, philosophically, blowing a cloud of smoke from his cigar up to the ceiling. "The South holds me through the mania I have to make promises, that craziness of throwing myself at people's heads and insisting on their happiness whether they want it or not — "

A footman interrupted him, opened the door and announced with a knowing and confidential air:

"M. Béchut is here."

The Minister was furious at once. "Tell him I am at breakfast! I wish people would let me alone."

The footman asked pardon, but said M. Béchut claimed that he had an appointment with his Excellency. Roumestan softened visibly:

"Well, well, I will come. Let him wait in the library."

"Not in the library," said Méjean, "it is occupied; there 's the Superior Council! You appointed this hour to see them."

"Well, in M. de Lappara's room, then — "

"I have put the Bishop of Tulle in there," said the footman timidly; "your Excellency said — "

Every place was occupied with office-seekers whom he had confidentially told that the breakfast hour was the time when they would be sure to find

him — and most of them were personages that could not be made to "do antechamber" like the ordinary herd.

"Go into my morning room," said Rosalie as she rose. "I am going out."

And while the secretary and the footman went to reassure and quiet the waiting petitioners Numa hastily swallowed his cup of vervain, scalding himself badly, exclaiming: "I am at my wits' end, overwhelmed."

"What can that sorry fellow Béchut be after now?" asked Rosalie, instinctively lowering her voice in that crowded house where a stranger was lurking behind every door.

"What is he after? After the manager's position of course. *Tè!* he is Dansaert's shark — he expects him to be thrown overboard for him to devour."

She approached him hastily:

"Is M. Dansaert to be dropped from the Cabinet?"

"Do you know him?"

"My father often spoke of him — he was a compatriot and old friend of his. He considers him an upright man and very clever."

Roumestan stammered out his reasons: "Bad tendencies — free-thinker — it was necessary to make reforms, and then, he was a very old man."

"And you will put Béchut in his place?"

"O, I know the poor man lacks the gift of pleasing the ladies."

She smiled a fine scornful smile.

"His impertinences are as indifferent to me as his compliments would be. What I cannot forgive in him is his assumption of clerical learning and piety. I respect all forms of religion — but if there is one thing more detestable in this world than another, it is hypocrisy and deceit."

Unconsciously her voice rose warm and vibrating; her rather cold features beamed with a glow of honesty and rectitude and flushed with righteous indignation.

"Hush, hush," said Numa pointing towards the door. Perhaps it was not perfectly just; he allowed that old Dansaert had rendered good service to his country; but what was to be done? He had given his word.

"Take it back" said Rosalie. "Come, Numa, for my sake — I implore you!"

The tender request was emphasized by the gentle pressure of her little hand upon his shoulder. He was much touched. His wife had not seemed interested in his affairs of late; she had given only an indulgent but silent attention to his plans, which were ever changing their direction. This urgent request was flattering to him.

"Can any one resist you, my darling?"

He pressed upon her finger tips a kiss so fervid that she felt it all up her narrow sleeve. She had such beautiful arms! It was most painful, however, to say anything disagreeable to a man's face and he rose reluctantly:

"I will be here, listening!" she said with a pretty threatening gesture.

He went into the next room, leaving the door ajar to give himself courage and so that she might hear all that was said. Oh, the beginning was firm and to the point!

"I am in despair, my dear Béchut — but it is utterly impossible for me to do for you as I promised —"

The answer of the professor was inaudible, but rendered in a tearful, supplicating voice through his huge tapir-like nose. To her surprise Roumestan did not waver, but began to sound the praises of Dansaert with a surprising accent of conviction for a man to whom all his arguments had only just been suggested. True, it was very hard for him to take back a promise once given, but was it not better than to do an act of injustice? It was his wife's thought modulated and put to music and uttered with wide, heartfelt gestures that made the hangings vibrate.

"Of course I will make up to you in some way this little misunderstanding," he added, changing his tone hastily.

"Oh, good Lord!" cried Rosalie under her breath. Then came a shower of new promises — the cross of commander in the Legion of Honor on the first of January next, the next vacancy in the Superior Council, the — the — Béchut tried to protest, just for decency's sake, but said Numa: "Permit me, permit me, it's only an act of justice — such men as you are too uncommon —"

Intoxicated with his own benevolence, stammering from sheer affectionateness — if Béchut had

not gone Numa would have offered him his own portfolio next. But suddenly remembering the concert, he called to him from the door:

"I count on seeing you next Sunday, my dear professor; we are starting a series of little concerts, very unceremonious you know — the very 'top of the basket' — "

Then returning to Rosalie, he said:

"Well, what do you think of it? I hope I have been firm enough!"

It was really so amusing that she burst into a peal of laughter. When he understood her amusement and that he had made a number of new promises, he seemed alarmed.

"Well, well, people are grateful to one all the same."

She left him, smiling one of her old smiles, quite gay from her kind deed and perhaps above all delighted to find a feeling for him reviving in her heart that she had long thought dead.

"Angel that you are!" said Numa to himself as he watched her go, tears of tenderness in his eyes; and when Méjean came in to remind him of the waiting council:

"My friend, listen: when one has the luck to possess a wife like mine — marriage is an earthly Paradise. Hurry up and marry!"

Méjean shook his head without answering.

"How now? Is n't your affair prospering?"

"I fear not. Mme. Roumestan promised to sound her sister for me, but as she has never said anything more — "

"Don't you want me to manage it for you? I get on splendidly with my little sister-in-law . . . I bet you I can make her decide . . ."

There was still a little vervain left in the teapot, and as he poured out a fresh cup Roumestan overflowed with protestations to his first secretary. "Ah! no, success had not altered him; as always, Méjean was his best, his chosen friend! Between him and Rosalie he indeed felt himself stronger and more complete. . . .

"O, my friend, that woman, that woman—if you only knew what her goodness is! how noble and forgiving! When I think that I was capable of—"

Positively it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from launching the confidence that rose to his lips along with a heavy sigh. "If I did not love her, I should be guilty indeed."

Baron de Lappara came in quickly and whispered with a mysterious air:

"Mlle. Bachellery is here."

Numa turned scarlet and a flash dried the tenderness from his eyes in a moment.

"Where is she? In your room?"

"Monsignor Lipmann was there already," said Lappara, smiling a little at the idea of the possible meeting. "I put her downstairs in the large drawing-room. The rehearsal is over."

"Very well; I will go."

"Don't forget the Council," Méjean tried to say, but Roumestan did not hear and sprang down the steep stairway leading to the Minister's private apartments on the reception floor.

He had steered clear of serious entanglements since the trouble over Mme. d'Escarbès, avoiding adventures of the heart or of vanity, because he feared an open rupture that might ruin his household forever. He was not a model husband, certainly, but the marriage contract, though soiled and full of holes, was still intact. Though once well warned, Rosalie was much too honest and high-minded to spy jealously upon her husband, and although she was always anxious, never sought for proofs. Even at that moment, if Numa had had any idea of the influence this new fancy of his was to have upon his life, he would have hastened to ascend the stairs much more quickly than he had come down them; but our destiny delights to come to us in mask and domino, doubling the pleasure of the first meeting with the touch of mystery. How could Numa divine that any danger threatened from the pretty little girl whom he had seen from his carriage window crossing the courtyard several days before, jumping over the puddles, holding her umbrella in one hand and her coquettish skirts gathered up in the other, with all the smartness of a true Parisian woman, her long lashes curving above a saucy, turned-up nose, her blond hair, twisted in an American knot behind, which the moist air had turned to curls at the ends, and her shapely, finely-curved leg quite at ease above her high-heeled boot — that was all he had seen of her. So during the evening he had said to De Lappara as if it were a matter of very little importance:

"I will wager, that little charmer I met in the courtyard this morning was on her way to see you."

"Yes, your Excellency, she came to see me, but it was on your account she came."

And then he had named little Bachellery.

"What! the *débutante* at the Bouffes? How old is she? Why, she's hardly more than a child!"

The papers were talking a great deal that winter about this Alice Bachellery, whom a fashionable *impresario* had discovered in a small theatre in the provinces, whom all the world was crowding to hear when she sang the "Little Baker's Boy," the chorus to which —

"Hot, hot, little oat-cakes" —

she gave with an irresistible drollery. She was one of those divas half a dozen of whom the boulevard devours each season, paper reputations inflated by gas and puffery, which make one think of the little rose-colored balloons that live their single day of sunshine and dust in the public gardens. And what think you she had come to ask for at the Minister's? Permission to appear on the programme at his first concert! Little Bachellery and the Department of Public Instruction! It was so amusing and so crazy that Numa wanted to hear her ask it himself; so by a Ministerial letter that smelt of the leather and gloves of the orderly who took it he gave her to understand that he would receive her next day. But the next day Mlle. Bachellery did not appear.

" Tempted by the broad floor, she was amusing herself by taking slides from one end of the room to the other"

"She must have changed her mind," said Lappara, "she is such a child!"

But Roumestan felt piqued, did not mention the subject for two days and on the third sent for her.

And now she was awaiting him in the great drawing-room for official functions, all in gold and red, so imposing with its long windows opening into the garden now bereft of flowers, its Gobelin tapestries and its marble statue of Molière sitting in a dreamy posture in the background. A grand piano, a few music-stands used at the rehearsal, scarcely filled one corner of the big room whose dreary air, like an empty museum, would have disconcerted any one but little Bachellery; but then she was such a child!

Tempted by the broad floor, all waxed and shiny, here she was, amusing herself by taking slides from one end of the room to the other, wrapped in her furs, her hands in a muff too small for them, her little nose upraised under her jaunty pork-pie hat, looking like one of the dancers of the "ice ballet" in *The Prophet.* Roumestan caught her at the game.

"Oh! Your Excellency!"

She was dreadfully embarrassed, her eyelashes quivering, all out of breath. He had come in with his head up and a solemn step in order to give some point to a somewhat irregular interview and put this impertinent huzzy, who had kept Ministers waiting, in her proper place. But the sight of her quite disarmed him. What could you expect?

She laid her simple ambition so cleverly before him as an idea that had come to her suddenly, to appear at the concerts which every one was talking about so much — it would be of so much advantage to her to be heard otherwise than in comic opera and music hall extravaganzas, which bored her to death! But then, on reflection, a panic had seized her: "Oh, I tell you, a regular panic! Was n't it, Mamma?"

Then for the first time Roumestan perceived a stout woman in a velvet cloak and a much beplumed bonnet advancing toward him with regular reverences every three steps. Mme. Bachellery, the mother, had been a singer in a concert-garden. She had the Bordeaux accent, a little nose like her daughter's sunk in a large face like a dish — one of those terrible mothers, who, in the company of their daughters, seem the hideous prophecy of what their beauty will come to! But Numa was not engaged in a philosophical study. He was too much engrossed by the grace of this hoyden that shone from a finished body, a body adorably finished, as well as by her theatrical slang mingled with her child-like laugh, "her sixteen-year-old laugh," as the ladies of her acquaintance called it.

"Sixteen! then how old could she have been when she went on the stage?"

"She was born there, your Excellency. Her father, now retired, was the manager of the Folies Bordelaises."

"A daughter of the regiment," said Alice, show-

ing thirty-two sparkling teeth, as close and evenly ranked as soldiers on parade.

"Alice, Alice, you forget yourself in the presence of his Excellency."

"Let her alone — she is only a child!"

He made her sit down by him on the sofa in a kindly, almost paternal manner, complimented her on her ambition and her sentiment for real art, her desire to escape from the easy and demoralizing successes of comic opera; but then she would have to work hard and study seriously.

"O, as for that," she answered, brandishing a roll of music, "I study two hours every day with Mme. Vauters."

"Mme. Vauters? Yes, hers is an excellent method," and he opened the roll of music and examined its contents with a knowing air.

"What are we singing now? Aha! The waltz of *Mireille*, the song of Magali. Why, they are the songs of my part of the country!"

He half closed his eyes and keeping time with his head he began softly to hum:

"O Magali, ma bien-aimée,
Fuyons tous deux sous la ramée
Au fond du bois silencieux. . . ."

And she took it up:

"La nuit sur nous étend ses voiles
Et tes beaux yeux —"

And Roumestan sang out loud:

"Vont faire pâlir les étoiles. . . ."

"Do wait a moment," she cried, "Mamma will play us the accompaniment."

Pushing aside the music-stands and opening the piano, she led her reluctant mother to the piano-stool. Ah, she was such a determined little person! The Minister hesitated a moment with his finger on the page of the duet — what if any one should hear them? Never mind; there had been rehearsals going on every day in the big salon. . . . They began.

They were singing together from the same sheet of music as they stood, while Mme. Bachellery played from memory. Their heads were almost touching, their breaths mingled together with caressing modulations of the music. Numa got excited and dramatic, raising his arms to bring out the high notes. For many years now, ever since his political life had absorbed him, he had done more talking than singing. His voice had become heavy like his figure, but he still loved to sing, especially with this child.

He had completely forgotten the Bishop of Tulle and the Superior Council which was wearily awaiting him round the big green table. Several times the pallid face of the chamberlain on duty, his official silver chain clanking, peered into the room but quickly disappeared again, terrified lest he should be caught gazing at the Minister of Public Instruction and Religions singing a duet with an actress from one of the minor theatres. But a Minister Numa was no longer, only Vincent the basket-maker pursuing the unapproachable

Magali through all her coquettish transformations. And how well she fled! how well, with childish malice, she did make her escape, her ringing laughter clear as pearls rippling over her sharp little teeth, until at last, overcome, she yields and her mad little head, made dizzy by her rapid course, sinks on her lover's shoulder! . . .

Mme. Bachellery broke the charm and recalled them to their senses as soon as the song was finished. Turning round, she cried:

"What a voice, Excellency! What a noble voice!"

"Yes, I used to sing when I was young" he said, somewhat fatuously.

"But you still sing *maganifisuntly!* Say, Baby, what a contrast to M. de Lappara!"

Baby, who was rolling up her music, shrugged her shoulders as much as to say, that was too much of a truism to be discussed or to need further answer. A little anxious, Roumestan asked:

"Indeed? M. de Lappara?"

"O, he sometimes comes to eat *bouillabaise* with us; then after dinner Baby and he sing duets together."

Hearing the music no longer, the chamberlain ventured at last into the room, as cautiously as a lion-tamer going into a cage of lions.

"Yes, yes, I am coming," said Roumestan, and addressing the little actress with his best "Excellency air" in order to make her feel the difference in position between him and his secretary:

"I am very much pleased with your singing,

Mademoiselle; you have a great deal of talent, a great deal! And if you care to sing for us on Sunday next, I gladly grant you that favor."

She gave a joyful, childlike cry: "Really? O, how lovely of you!" — and in an instant flung her arms about his neck.

"Alice! Alice! Well, I declare!" cried her mother.

But she was gone; she had taken flight through the great rooms where she looked so tiny in the long perspective — a child! O, such a perfect child!

Much agitated by her caress, Roumestan paused a few moments before he went upstairs. Outside in the wintry garden one pale sun-ray shone on the withered lawn and seemed to warm and revive the winter. He felt penetrated to the heart by a similar warmth as if the contact with this supple youthful form communicated some of its spring-like vitality to him. "Ah! how charming is youth!"

Instinctively he glanced at himself in the mirror; a mournfulness came over him that he had not felt for years. How changed things were, *boun Diou!* He had grown very stout from want of exercise, much sitting at his desk and the too constant use of his carriage; his complexion was injured by staying up late at night, his hair thin and grizzled at the temples; he was even more horrified at the fatness of his cheeks and the vast flat expanse between his nose and his ears. "I have a mind to grow a beard to cover that." But then the beard

would be white — and yet he was only forty-five. Alas, politics age one so!

He was suffering there, in those few moments, the frightful anguish a woman feels when she realizes that all is over — her power of inspiring love is gone, while her own power to love still remains. His reddened lids swelled with tears; there in the midst of his masterful place this sorrow profoundly human, in which ambition had no part, seemed to him bitter almost beyond endurance. But with his usual versatility of feeling he consoled himself quickly by thinking of his talents, his fame and his high position. Were they not just as strong as beauty or as youth in order to make him loved?

"Come, come!"

He quite despised himself for his folly, and, driving off his troubles with the customary jerk of his shoulder, went upstairs to dismiss the Council, for he had no time left to preside to-day.

"What has happened to you, my dear Excellency, you seem to have renewed your youth?"

This question was asked him a dozen times in the lobby of the Chambers, where his good humor was remarked upon and where he caught himself humming, "O Magali, my well-beloved." Sitting on the Bench he listened with an attention most flattering to the speaker during a long-winded discourse about the tariff, smiling beatifically beneath his lowered eyelids.

So the Left, whom his character for astuteness held in awe, said timidly one to the other: "Let

us hold fast, Roumestan is preparing a coup!" In reality he was engaged in bringing before his mental vision, through the empty hum of the wearying discourse, the outlines of little Bachellery, trotting her out, as it were, before the Ministerial Bench, passing her attractions in review, her hair waving like a golden net across her brow, her wild-rose complexion, her bewitching air of a girl who was already a woman!

Nevertheless, that evening he had another attack of moodiness on the train returning from Versailles with some of his colleagues of the Cabinet. In the heated carriage where every one was smoking they were discussing, in the free and easy manner that Numa always carried about with him, a certain orange-colored velvet bonnet in the diplomats' gallery that framed a pale Creole face; it had proved an agreeable diversion from the tariff question and caused all the honorable noses to rise, just as the sudden appearance of a butterfly in a school-room will fix the attention of the class in the middle of a Greek lesson. Who was she? No one knew.

"You must ask the General," said Numa gayly, turning to the Marquis d'Espaillon d'Aubord, Minister of War, an old rake, tireless in love. "That's all right — do not try to get out of it — she never looked at any one but you."

The General cut a sinister grimace that caused his old yellow goat's moustache to fly up under his nose as if it were moved by springs.

"It is a good while since women have bothered

themselves about me — they only care for bucks like that!"

In this extremely choice language peculiar to noblemen and soldiers he indicated young De Lappara, sitting modestly in a corner of the carriage with Numa's portfolio on his lap, respectfully silent in the company of the big-wigs.

Roumestan felt piqued, he did not know exactly why, and replied hotly. In his opinion there were many other things that women preferred to youth in a man.

"They tell you that, of course."

"I ask the opinion of these gentlemen."

These gentlemen were all elderly, some so fat that their coats would hardly meet across their stomachs, some thin and dried up, bald or quite white, with defective teeth and ugly mouths, many of them in failing health — these Ministers and Under-secretaries of State all agreed with Numa. The discussion became very animated as the Parliamentary train rushed along with its noise of wheels and loud talk.

"Our Ministers are having a great row," said the people in the neighboring compartments.

Several newspaper reporters tried to hear through the partitions what they were saying.

"The well-known man, the man in power!" thundered Numa, "that is what they like. To know that the man who is kneeling before them with his head on their knees is a great man, a powerful man, one who moves the world — that works them up!"

"Yes, indeed!"

"You are right, quite right."

"I am of your opinion, my dear colleague."

"Well, as for me, I tell you that when I was only a poor little lieutenant on the staff and went out on my Sunday leave, dressed in my best, with my five and twenty years and my new shoulder-straps, I used to get many long, fond glances from the women whom I met, those glances like a whip that make your whole body tingle from head to foot, looks that cannot be got by a big epaulette of my age. And so, now, when I want to feel the warmth and sincerity in looks of that sort from lovely eyes, silent declarations in the open street, do you know what I do? I take one of my aides-de-camp, young, cocky, with a fine figure and — get them by promenading by his side, S — d — m — s — !"

Roumestan did not speak again until they reached Paris. As in the morning, he was again plunged in gloom, but furious also against those fools of women who could be so blind as to go crazy over boobies and fops.

What was there particularly fascinating about De Lappara he would like to know? Throughout the discussion he had sat fingering his beard with a fatuous air, looking conceited in his perfect clothes and low-cut shirt collar, and not saying a word. He would have liked to slap him. Probably it was that air he took when he sang *Mireille* with little Bachellery — who was probably his mistress. The idea was horrible to him — but still he would have liked to know the truth about it and convince himself.

As soon as they were alone and driving to the Ministry in the coupé he said to Lappara suddenly, brutally, without looking at him:

"Have you known these women long?"

"Which women, your Excellency?"

"The Bachellerys, of course; O, come!"

He had been thinking of them so constantly himself that he felt as if every one else must be doing the same thing. Lappara laughed.

O, yes—he had known them a long time; they were countrywomen of his. The Bachellery family and the Folies Bordelaises were part of the jolliest souvenirs of his youth. He had been desperately enough in love with the mother when he was a lad to make all his school-boy buttons split.

"And to-day in love with the daughter?" asked Roumestan playfully, rubbing the misty window with his glove to look out into the dark rainy street.

"Ah!—the daughter is a horse of another color. Although she seems to be so light and frisky, she is really a very serious and cool young person. I don't know what she is aiming at, but I feel that it is something that I can never have the chance to offer her."

Numa felt comforted: "Really—and yet you continue to go there!"

"O, yes, they are so amusing, the Bachellery family. The father, the retired manager, writes comic songs for the concert-gardens. The mother sings and acts them while frying eels in oil and

making a *bouillabaise* that Roubion's own is n't a patch on. Noise, disorder, bits of music, rows — there you have the Folies Bordelaises at home. Alice rules the roost, rushes about like mad, runs the supper, sings; but never loses her head for one moment."

"Well, gay boy, you expect her to lose it some day, do you not? and in your favor!" Suddenly becoming very serious the Minister added: "It is not a good place for you to go to, young man. The devil! You must learn to take life more seriously than you do. The Bordelaise folly cannot last all your life."

He took his hand: "Do you never think of marrying?"

"No, indeed, Excellency. I am perfectly content as I am — unless, indeed, I should find some uncommon bonanza."

"We could find you the bonanza — with your name, your connections . . . what would you say to Mlle. Le Quesnoy?"

"O, Excellency — I never should have dared . . ."

Notwithstanding all his boldness, the Bordeaux man grew pale with joy and astonishment.

"Why not? You must, you must — you know how highly I esteem you, my dear boy; I should like to have you as a member of my family — I should feel stronger, more rounded out — "

He stopped suddenly, remembering that he had used these same words to Méjean that same morning.

"Well, I can't help it — it 's done now."

He jerked his shoulder and sank into a corner of the coupé.

"After all, Hortense is free to choose for herself; she can decide. I shall have saved this boy anyhow from spending his time in bad company." And in fact Roumestan really thought that this motive alone had made him act as he did.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING PARTY AT THE MINISTRY.

THERE was an unusual look to the Faubourg St. Germain that evening. Quiet little streets that were sleeping peacefully at an early hour were awakened by the jolting of omnibuses turned from their usual course; while other streets, where usually the uninterrupted stream and roar of great Parisian arteries prevail, were like a river-bed from which the water has been drained. Silent, empty, apparently enlarged, the entrance was guarded by the outline of a mounted policeman or by the sombre shadows across the asphalt of a line of civic guards, with hoods drawn up over their caps and hands muffled in their long sleeves, saying by a gesture to carriages as they approached: "No one can pass."

"Is it a fire?" asked a frightened man, putting his head out of the carriage window.

"No, sir; it is the evening party of the Public Instruction."

The sentry passed on and the coachman drove off, swearing at being obliged to go so far out of his way on that left bank of the Seine, where the little streets planned without system are still somewhat confusing, after the fashion of old Paris.

At a distance, sure enough, the brilliant lights from the two fronts of the Ministry, the bonfires lighted in the middle of the streets because of the cold, the gleam from lines of lanterns on the carriages converging to one spot, threw a halo round the whole quarter like the reflection of a great conflagration, made more brilliant by the limpid blueness of the sky and the frosty dryness of the air. On approaching the house, however, one was reassured by the perfect arrangements of the party; for the conflagration was but the glare of the even white light rising to the eaves of the nearer houses, that rendered visible, as distinctly as by day, the names in gold upon the different public buildings — "Mayory of the Seventh District," "Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs," fading off in Bengal flames and fairylike illumination among the branches of some big and leafless trees.

Among those who lingered notwithstanding the chill wind and formed a hedge of curious gazers near the hotel gates was a little pale shadow with awkward, ducklike gait, wrapped from head to foot in a long peasant's cloak, which allowed nothing of her but two piercing eyes to be visible. She walked up and down, bent with the cold, her teeth chattering, but insensible to the biting frost in the fever and intoxication of her excitement. Occasionally she would rush at some carriage in the row advancing slowly up the Rue de Grenelle with a luxurious noise of jingling harness and champing bits of impatient horses, where dainty

forms clad in white were dimly seen behind the misty carriage windows. Then she would return to the entrance where the privilege of a special ticket allowed the carriage of some dignitary to break the line and enter. She pushed the people aside: "Excuse me — just let me look a moment." Under the blaze from the lamp-stands built in the form of yew trees, under the striped awning of the marquees, the carriage doors, opening with a bang, discharged upon the carpets their freight of rustling satin, billowy tulle and glowing flowers.

The little figure leaned eagerly forward and hardly withdrew herself quickly enough to avoid being crushed by the next carriage to come on.

Audiberte was determined to see for herself how such an entertainment was managed. How proudly she gazed on this crowd and these lights, the soldiers ahorse and afoot, the police and these brilliant goings-on, all this part of Paris turned topsy-turvy in honor of Valmajour's tabor! For it was being given in his honor and she was sure that his name was on the lips of all these fine and beautiful gentlemen and ladies. From the front entrance on Grenelle Street she rushed to that on Bellechasse Street, through which the empty carriages drove out; there she mingled with the civic guards and the coachmen in immense coats with capes round a *brasero* flaming in the middle of the street, and was astonished to hear these people talking of every-day matters, the sharp cold of that winter, potatoes freezing in the cellars, of things

absolutely foreign to the function and her brother. The slowness of the crawling line of carriages particularly irritated her; she longed to see the last one drive up and be able to say: "Ready at last! Now it will begin. This time it is really commencing."

But with the deepening of the night the cold became more penetrating; she could have cried with the pain of her nearly frozen feet; but it is pretty rough to cry when one's heart is so happy!

At last she made up her mind to go home, after taking in all this gorgeousness in one last look and carrying it off in her poor, savage little head as she passed along the dismal streets through the icy night. Her temples throbbed with the fever of ambition and almost burst with dreams and hopes, whilst her eyes were forever dazzled and, as it were, blinded by that illumination to the honor and glory of the Valmajours.

But what would she have said, had she gone in, had she seen all those drawing-rooms in white and gold unfolding themselves in perspective beneath their arcaded doorways, enlarged by mirrors on which fell the flames of the chandeliers, the wall decorations, the dazzling glitter of diamonds and military trappings, the orders of all kinds — palm-shaped, in tufted form, broochlike, or big as Catherine wheels, or small as watch-charms, or else fastened about the neck with those broad red ribbons which make one think of bloody decapitations!

Pell-mell among great names belonging to the Faubourg St. Germain there were present ministers, generals, ambassadors, members of the Institute and the Superior Council of the University. Never in the arena at Aps, no, not even at the tabor matches in Marseilles, had Valmajour had such an audience. To tell the truth, his name did not occupy much space at this festival which was given in his honor. The programme was decorated with marvellous borders from the pen of Dalys, and certainly mentioned "Various Airs on the Tabor" with the name of Valmajour in combination with that of several lyrical pieces; but people did not look at the programme. Only the intimate friends, only those people who are acquainted with everything that is going on, said to the Minister as he stood to receive at the entrance to the first drawing-room:

"So you have a tabor-player?" And he answered, with his thoughts elsewhere:

"Yes, a whim of the ladies."

He was not thinking much of poor Valmajour that evening, but of another appearance much more important to him. What would people say? Would she be a success? Had not the interest he had taken in the child made him exaggerate her talent? And, very much in love, although he would not have owned it yet to himself, bitten to the bone by the absorbing passion of an elderly man, he felt all the anxiety of the father, husband, lover or milliner of a *débutante*, one of those sorrowful anxieties such as one often sees in some-

body restlessly wandering behind the scenes on the night of a first representation. That did not prevent him from being amiable, warm and meeting his guests with both hands outstretched; and what guests, *boun Diou!* nor from simpering, smiling, neighing, prancing, throwing back his body, twisting and bending with unfailing if some what monotonous effusion — but with shades of difference, nevertheless.

Suddenly quitting, almost pushing aside, the guest to whom he was speaking in a low voice and promising endless favors, he flew to meet a stately lady with crimson cheeks and authoritative manner: "Ah, Madame la Maréchale," and placing in his own the august arm encased in a twenty-button glove, he led his noble guest through the rooms between a double row of obsequious black coats to the concert room, where Mme. Roumestan presided, assisted by her sister.

As he passed through the rooms on his return he scattered kind words and hand-shakes right and left. "Count on me! It's a settled thing!" — or else he threw rapidly his "How are you, friend?" — or again, in order to warm up the reception and put a sympathetic current flowing through all this solemn society crowd, he would present people to each other, throwing them without warning into each other's arms: "What! you do not know each other? The Prince of Anhalt! — M. Bos, Senator!" and never noticed that the two men, their names hardly uttered, after

a hasty duck of the head and a "Sir" — "Sir," merely waited till he was gone to turn their backs on each other with a ferocious look.

Like the greater number of political antagonists, our good Numa had relaxed and let himself out when he had won the fight and come to power. Without ceasing to belong to the party of moral order, this Vendean from the South had lost his fine ardor for the Cause, permitted his grand hopes to slumber, and began to find that things were not so bad after all. Why should these savage hatreds exist between nice people? He yearned for peace and a general indulgence. He counted on music to operate a fusion among the parties, his little fortnightly concerts becoming a neutral ground for artistic and sociable enjoyment, where the most bitterly hostile people might meet each other and learn to esteem one another in a spot apart from the passions and torments of politics.

That was why there was such a queer mixture in the invitations; thence also the embarrassment and lack of ease among the guests; therefore also colloquies in low tones suddenly interrupted and that curious going and coming of black coats, the assumed interest seen in looks raised to the ceiling, examining the gilded fluting of the panels, the decorations of the time of the Directory, half Louis XVI, half Empire, with bronze heads on the upright lines of the marble chimneypieces. People were hot and at the same time cold, as if, one might believe, the terrible frost outside,

changed by the thick walls and the wadding of the hangings, had been converted into moral cold. From time to time the rushing about of De Lappara and De Rochemaure to find seats for the ladies broke in upon the monotonous strolling about of bored men, or else a stir was made by the sensational entrance of the beautiful Mme. Hubler, her hair dressed with feathers, her profile dry like that of an indestructible doll, with a smile like a stamped coin drawn up to her very eyebrows—a wax doll in a hair-dresser's window. But the cold soon returned again.

"It is the very devil to thaw out these rooms of the Public Instruction. I am sure the ghost of Frayssinous walks here at night."

This remark in a loud tone was made by one of a group of young musicians gathered obsequiously round Cadaillac, the manager of the opera, who was sitting philosophically on a velvet couch with his back against the statue of Molière. Very fat, half deaf, with a bristling white moustache, his face puffy and impenetrable, it was hard to find in him the natty and politic young *impresario* under whose care the "Nabob" had given his entertainments; his eyes alone told of the Parisian joker, his ferocious science of life, his spirit, hard as a blackthorn with an iron ferule, toughened in the fire of the footlights. But full and sated and content with his place and fearful of losing it at the end of his contract, he sheathed his claws and talked little and especially little here; his only criticism on this official and social comedy being

a laugh as silent and inscrutable as that of Leather-Stocking.

"Boissaric, my good fellow," he asked in a low voice of an ambitious young Toulousian who had just had a ballet accepted at the opera after only ten years of waiting — a thing nobody could believe — "you who know everything, tell me who that solemn-looking man with a big moustache is who talks familiarly to every one and walks behind his nose with as thoughtful an air as if he were going to the funeral of that feature: he must belong to the shop, for he talked theatre to me as one having authority."

"I don't think he is an actor, master, I think he is a diplomat. I just heard him say to the Belgian Minister that he had been his colleague a long time."

"You are mistaken, Boissaric. He must be a foreign general; only a moment ago I heard him perorating in a crowd of big epaulettes and he was saying: 'Unless one has commanded a large body of men —'"

"Strange!"

They asked Lappara, who happened to pass; he laughed.

"Why, it's Bompard!"

"*Què aco Bompard?*" (Who is this Bompard?)

"A friend of Roumestan's. How is it you have never met him?"

"Is he from the South?"

"*Té!* I should say so!"

In truth, Bompard, buttoned tightly into a grand

new suit with a velvet collar, his gloves thrust into his waistcoat, was really trying to help his friend in the entertainment of his guests by a varied but continuous conversation. Quite unknown in the official world, where he appeared to-day for the first time, he may be said to have made a sensation as he carried his faculty for invention from group to group, telling his marvellous visions, his stories of royal love affairs, adventures and combats, triumphs at the Federal shooting-matches in Switzerland, all of which produced the same effects upon his audience — astonishment, embarrassment and disquiet. Here at least there was an element of gayety, but it was only for a few intimates who knew him. Nothing could dispel the cloud of *ennui* that penetrated even into the concert room, a large and very picturesque apartment with its two tiers of galleries and its glass ceiling that gave the impression of being under the open sky.

A decoration of green palms and banana-trees, whose long leaves hung motionless in the light of the chandeliers, made a fresh background to the toilettes of the women sitting on numberless rows of chairs placed close together. It was a wave of white moving necks, arms and shoulders rising from their bodices like half-opened flowers, heads dressed with jewelled stars, diamonds flashing against the blue depths of black tresses or waves of gold from the locks of blondes; a mass of lovely figures in profile, full of health, with lines of beauty from waist to throat, or fine slender forms, from a narrow waist clasped by a little jew-

elled buckle up to a long neck circled with velvet. Fans of all colors, bright with spangles, shot with hues, danced in butterfly lightness over all and mingled the perfumes of "white rose" or opoponax with the feeble breath of white lilacs and natural fresh violets.

The bored expression on the faces of the guests was deeper here as they reflected that for two mortal hours they must sit thus before the platform on which was spread out in a semicircular row the chorus, the men in black coats, the women in white muslin, impassive as if sitting in front of a camera, while the orchestra was concealed behind copses of green leaves and roses, out of which the arms of the bass-viols reared themselves like instruments of torture. Oh, the torment of the "music stocks"! All of them knew it, for it was one of the cruelest fatigues of the season and of their worldly burden. That is why, looking everywhere, the only happy, smiling face to be found in the immense room was that of Mme. Roumestan — not that ballet-dancer's smile, common to professional hostesses, which so easily changes to a look of angry fatigue when no one is watching. Hers was the face of a happy woman, a woman loved, just starting on a new life.

O, the endless tenderness of an honest soul which has never throbbed but for one person! She had begun to believe again in her Numa; he had been so kind and tender for some time back. It was like a return; it seemed as if their two hearts were closely knit again after a long parting. Without

asking whence came this renewal of affection in her husband, she found him loverlike and young once more, as he was the night that she showed him the panel of the hunt; and she herself was still the same fair young Diana, supple and charming in her frock of white brocade, her fair hair simply banded on her brow, so pure and without an evil thought, looking five years younger than her thirty summers!

Hortense was very pretty to-night also; all in blue — blue tulle that enveloped her slender figure like a cloud and lent a soft shade to her brunette face. She was much preoccupied with the début of her musician. She wondered how the spoiled Parisians would like this music from the provinces and whether, as Rosalie had said, the tabor-player ought not to be framed in a landscape of gray olive-trees and hills that look like lace. Silently, though very anxious in the rustle of fans, conversations in low voice and the tuning of the instruments, she counted the pieces that must come before Valmajour appeared.

A blow from the leader with his bow on his desk, a rustling of paper on the platform as the chorus rises, music in hand, a long look of the victims toward the high doorway clogged with black coats, as if yearning to flee, and the first notes of a choral by Glück ring through the room and soar upward to the glassy ceiling where the winter's night lays its blue sheets of cold.

"*Ah, dans ce bois funeste et sombre. . . .*"

The concert has begun.

The taste for music has increased greatly in France within the last few years. Particularly in Paris, the Sunday concerts and those given during Holy Week, and the numberless musical clubs, have aroused the public taste and made the works of the great masters known to all, making a musical education the fashion. But at bottom Paris is too full of life, too given over to intellect, really to love music, that absorbing goddess who holds you motionless without voice or thought in a floating web of harmony, and hypnotizes you like the ocean; in Paris the follies that are done in her name are like those committed by a fop for a mistress who is the fashion; it is a passion of *chic*, played to the gallery, commonplace and hollow to the point of *ennui !*

Ennui !

Yes, boredom was the prevailing note of this concert at the Ministry of Public Instruction. Beneath that forced admiration, that expression of simulated ecstasy which belongs to the worldly side of the sincerest woman, the look of boredom rose higher and higher; there soon appeared unmistakable signs that dimmed the brilliant smile and shining eyes and changed completely their charming, languishing poses, like the motion of birds upon the branches or when sipping water drop by drop. On the long rows of endless chairs these fine ladies, one woman after the other, would make their fight, trying to reanimate themselves with cries of "Bravo! Divine! Delicious!" and then, one after another, would succumb to the ris-

ing torpor which ascended like the mists above a sounding sea, driving far away into the distance of indifference all the artists who defiled before them one by one.

And yet the most famous and illustrious artists of Paris were there, interpreting classical music with all the scientific exactness it demands, which, alas, cannot be acquired save at the expense of years. Why, it is thirty years now that Mme. Vauters has been singing that beautiful romanza of Beethoven "L'Apaisement," and yet never has she done it with more passion than this evening. But it seems as if strings were lacking to the instrument; one can hear the bow scraping on the violin. And behold! of the great singer of former days and of that famous classical beauty there remains nothing else but well studied attitudes, an irreproachable method and that long white hand which at the last stanza brushes aside a tear from the corner of her eye, made deep with charcoal — a tear that translates a sob which her voice can no longer render.

What singer save Mayol, handsome Mayol, has ever sighed forth the serenade from "Don Juan" with such ethereal delicacy — that passion which is like the love of a dragon-fly? Unfortunately people don't hear it any longer. There is no use for him to rise atiptoe with outstretched neck and draw out the note to its very end, while accompanying it with the easy gesture of a yarn-spinner seizing her wool with two fingers — nothing comes out, nothing! Paris is grateful for pleasures which

are past and applauds all the same; but these used-up voices, these withered and too well-known faces, medals whose design has been gradually eaten away by passing from hand to hand, can never dissipate the heavy fog which infests the Minister's party. No, notwithstanding every effort which Roumestan makes to enliven it, notwithstanding the enthusiastic bravos which he hurls in his loudest voice into the phalanx of black coats, nor the "Hush!" with which he frightens people who attempt to converse two apartments away, and who thereafter prowl about silent as spectres in that strong illumination and change their places with every precaution in the hopes of finding some distraction, their backs rounded and their arms swinging — or fall completely crushed upon the low arm-chairs, their opera hats suspended between their legs — idiotic and with faces empty of expression!

At one time, it is true, the appearance of Alice Bachellery on the stage wakes up and enlivens the audience; a struggling bunch of curious people assails each of the two doors of the hall in order to see the little diva in her short skirt on the platform, her mouth half open and her long lashes quivering as if with surprise at seeing all this multitude.

"*Chaud! chaud! les p'tits pains d' gruau!*" hum the young club-men as they imitate the low-lived gesture that accompanies the end of her refrain. Old gentlemen belonging to the University approach, trembling all over, and turning their good ear toward her, in order not to lose a bit

of the fashionable vulgarity. So there is a disappointment when, in her somewhat shrill and limited voice, the little pastry-cook's boy begins to produce one of the grand airs from "Alceste," prompted by Mme. Vauters, who is encouraging her from the flies. Then the faces fall and the black coats disperse and begin once more their wandering with all the more freedom, now that the Minister is not watching them; for he has slipped off to the end of the last drawing-room on the arm of M. de Boë, who is quite stunned by the honor accorded him.

Eternal infancy of Love! What though you may have twenty years of law at the Palace of Justice behind you and fifteen years on the Bench; what though you may be sufficiently master of yourself to preserve in the midst of the most agitated assemblies and most ferocious interruptions the fixed idea and the cold-bloodedness of a gull that is fishing in the heart of a storm — nevertheless, if passion shall once enter into your life, you will find yourself the feeblest among the feeble, trembling and cowardly to the point of hanging desperately to the arm of some fool, rather than listen bravely to the slightest criticism of your idol.

"Excuse me — I must leave you — here is the *entr'acte* — " and the Minister hurries away, casting the young *maître des requêtes* back into that original obscurity of his from which he shall never emerge again. The crowd struggles toward the sideboards; the relieved expression on the faces of all these unfortunate listeners, who have at

last regained the right to move and speak, is sufficient to make Numa believe that his little *protégée* has just won a tremendous success. People press about him and felicitate him — "Divine! Delicious!" But there is nobody to talk positively to him about the thing that interests him, so that at last he grabs hold of Cadaillac, who is passing near him, walking sidewise and splitting the human stream with his enormous shoulder as a lever.

"Well? well? How did you like her?"

"Why, whom do you mean?"

"The little girl," said Numa in a tone which he tries to make perfectly indifferent. The other man, who is good enough at fencing, comprehends at once and says without blenching:

"A revelation!"

The lover flushes up as if he were twenty years old — as when, at the Café Malmus, "everybody's old girl" pressed his foot under the table.

"Then — you think that at the opera —?"

"No sort of question! — but she would have to have a good one to put her on the stage," said Cadaillac with his silent laugh. And while the Minister rushes off to congratulate Mlle. Alice, the "good one to put her on the stage" continues his march in the direction of the buffet which can be seen, framed by an enormous mirror without a border, at the end of a drawing-room which is all brown and gilded woodwork. Notwithstanding the severity of the hangings and the impudent and pompous air of the butlers, who are certainly chosen from University men who have missed

their examination, at this spot the nasty tempers and boredom have disappeared in front of the enormous counter crammed with delicate glasses, fruits and pyramids of sandwiches; humanity has regained its rights and these evil looks give way to attitudes of desire and voracity. Through the narrowest space that remains open between two busts or between two heads bending over toward the bit of salmon or chicken wing on their little plate, an arm intrudes, attempting to seize a tumbler or fork or roll of bread, scraping off rice powder on shoulders or on a black sleeve or a brilliant, crude uniform. People chatter and grow animated, eyes glitter, laughter rises under the influence of the foaming wines. A thousand bits of speech cross each other — interrupted remarks, answers to questions already forgotten. In one corner one hears little screams of indignation: "What a brute! How disgusting!" about the scientist Béchut, that enemy of women, who is going on reviling the weaker sex. Then a quarrel among musicians. "But, my dear fellow, beware — you are denying altogether the increase of the *quinte*."

"Is it really true she is only sixteen?"

"Sixteen years of the cask and some few extra years of the bottle."

"Mayol! — O, come now! Mayol! — finished, empty! and to think that the opera gives two thousand francs every night to that thing!"

"Yes, but he has to spend a thousand francs of seats to get his auditorium warm, and then, on the

sly, Cadaillac gets all the rest of it away from him playing écarté."

"Bordeaux! — chocolate! — champagne! —"

"— will have to come and explain himself before the commission."

"— by raising the ruche a little with bows of white satin."

In another part of the house Mlle. Le Quesnoy, closely surrounded by friends, recommends her tabor player to a foreign correspondent with an impudent head as flat as that of a *choumacre* and begs him not to leave before the end of the play; she scolds Méjean, who is not supporting her properly, and calls him a false Southerner, a *franciot* and a renegade. In the group near by a political discussion has started. One mouth opens in a hateful way with foam about the teeth and says, chewing on the words as if they were musket balls and he would like to poison them:

"Whatever exists in the most destructive of demagogies —"

"— Marat the conservative!" said a voice — but the rest of the sentence was lost in a confused noise of conversations mixed with clattering of plates and glasses, which the coppery tones of Roumestan's voice all of a sudden dominated: "Ladies! hurry, ladies! — or you will miss the sonata in *fa!*"

There is a silence as of the dead. Then the long procession of trailing trains begins to cross the drawing-room and settle itself once more into the rows of chairs. The women have that despairing

face one sees on captives who are returned to prison after an hour's walk in the open fields. And so the concertos and symphonies follow each other, note after note. Handsome Mayol begins again to draw out that intangible note of his and Mme. Vauters to touch again the loosened cords of her voice. All of a sudden a sign of life appears, a movement of curiosity, just as it was a little while ago when the small Mlle. Bachellery made her entrance. It is the tabor-player Valmajour, the apparition of that proud peasant, his soft felt hat over one ear, his red belt around his waist and his plainsman's jacket on one shoulder. It was an idea of Audiberte's, an instinct in her natural feminine taste, to dress him in this way in order to give him greater effect in the midst of all the black coats. Well, well, at last, this at least is new and unexpected — this long tabor which hangs to the arm of the musician, the little fife on which his fingers move hither and yon, and the charming airs to the double music whose movement, rousing and lively, gives a moire-like shiver of awakening to the satin of those lovely shoulders! That worn-out public is delighted with these songs of morning, so fresh and embalmed with country fragrances — these ballads of Old France.

"Bravo! Bravo! Encore!"

And when, with a large and victorious rhythm which the orchestra accompanies in a low note, he attacks the "March of Turenne," deepening and supporting his somewhat shrill instrument, the success is wild. He has to come back twice, ten times,

being applauded first of all by Numa, whom this solitary success has warmed completely and who now takes credit to himself for this "fancy of the ladies." He tells them how he discovered this genius, explains the great mystery of the fife with three holes and gives various details concerning the ancient castle of the Valmajours.

"Then he really is called Valmajour?"

"Certainly — belongs to the Princes des Baux — he is the last of the line."

And so this legend starts, scatters, expands, enlarges and becomes at last a regular novel by George Sand.

"I have the *parshemints* at my house," corroborates Bompard in a tone which permits of no question.

But in the midst of all this worldly enthusiasm more or less fabricated there is one little heart which is moved, one young head which is completely intoxicated and takes all these bravos and fables seriously. Without speaking a word, without even applauding, her eyes fixed and lost, her long, supple figure following in the balancing motion of a dream the bars of the heroic march, Hortense finds herself once more down there in Provence on the high terrace overlooking the sun-baked plain, whilst her musician plays for her a morning greeting, as if to one of those ladies in the Courts of Love, and then sticks her pomegranate flower on his tabor with a savage grace. This recollection moves her delightfully, and leaning her head on her sister's shoulder she murmurs very low: "O, how happy

I am!" uttering it with a deep and true accent which Rosalie does not notice at once, but which later on shall become more definite in her memory and shall haunt her like the stammered news of some misfortune.

"*Eh! bé!* My good Valmajour, did n't I tell you? What a success! — eh?" cried Roumestan in the little drawing-room where a stand-up supper was being served for the performers. As to this success, the other stars of the concert considered it a bit exaggerated. Mme. Vauters, who was seated in readiness to leave while she waited for her carriage, concealed her spite in a great big cape of lace filled with violent perfumes, while handsome Mayol, standing in front of the buffet, showing in his back his slack nerves and weariness by a peculiar gesture, tore to pieces with the greatest ferocity a poor little plover and imagined that he had the tabor-player under his knife. But little Bachellery did not stoop to any such bad temper. In the midst of a group of young fops, laughing, fluttering and digging her little white teeth into a ham sandwich, like a schoolboy assailed by the hunger of a growing child, she played her game of infancy. She tried to make music on Valmajour's fife.

"Just see, M'sieur le ministre!"

Then, noticing Cadaillac behind his Excellency, with a sharp twirl of her feet she advanced her forehead like that of a little girl for him to kiss.

"Howdy, uncle! —"

It was a relationship purely fantastic such as they adopt behind the scenes.

"What a make-believe madcap!" grunted the "right man to put one on the stage" behind his white moustache, but not in too loud a voice, because in all probability she was going to become one of his pensioners and a most influential pensioner.

Valmajour stood erect before the chimneypiece with a fatuous air, surrounded by a crowd of women and journalists. The foreign correspondent put his questions to him brutally, not at all in that hypocritical tone he used when interrogating ministers in special audiences; but, without being troubled in the least thereby, the peasant answered him with the stereotyped account his lips were used to: "It all come to me in the night while I listened me to the *nightingawles* singin'—"

He was interrupted by Mlle. Le Quesnoy, who offered him a glass of wine and a plate heaped up with good things especially for him.

"How do you do? You see this time I myself am bringing you the *grand-boire*." She had made her speech for a purpose, but he answered her with a slight nod of the head, and, pointing to the chimneypiece, said "All right, all right, put it down there," and went on with his story.

"So, what the birrud of the Lord could do with one hole . . ." Without being discouraged, Hortense waited to the end and then spoke to him about his father and his sister.

"She will be very much delighted, will she not?"

"O, yes; it has gone pretty well."

With a silly smile he stroked his moustache while looking about him with restless eyes. He had been told that the director of the opera desired to make him an offer and he was on the watch for him afar, feeling even at this early moment the jealousy of an actor and astonished that anybody could spend so much time with that good-for-nothing little singing-girl. Filled with his own thoughts, he took no trouble to answer the beautiful young girl standing before him, her fan in her hand, in that pretty, half-audacious attitude which the habit of society gives. But she loved him better as he was, disdainful and cold toward everything which was not his art; she admired him for accepting loftily the compliments which Cadaillac poured upon him with his off-hand roundness:

"Yes, I tell you . . . yes, indeed! . . . I tell you exactly what I mean . . . great deal of talent . . . very original, very new; I hope no other theatre save the Opera shall have your first appearance . . . I must find some occasion to bring you forward. From to-day on, consider yourself as one of the House!"

Valmajour thought of the paper with the government stamp on it which he had in the pocket of his jacket; but the other man, just as if he divined the thought that possessed him, stretched out his supple hand: "There, that engages us both, my dear fellow;" and pointing out Mayol and Mme. Vauters — who were luckily occupied elsewhere, for they would have laughed too loud — he continued:

"Ask your comrades what the given word of Cadaillac means!" At this he turned on his heel and went back into the ball.

Now it had become a party which had spread into less crowded but more animated rooms, and the fine orchestra was taking its revenge for three hours of classical music by giving waltzes of the purest Viennese variety. The lofty personages and solemn people having left, the floors now belonged to the young people, those maniacs of pleasure who dance for the love of dancing and for the intoxication of flying hair and swimming eyes and trains whipped round about their feet. But even then politics could not lose its rights and the fusion dreamt of by Roumestan did not take place. Even of the two rooms where they danced one of them belonged to the Left Centre and the other to the White, a flower de luce White without a stain, in spite of the efforts Hortense made to bind the two camps together! Much sought out as the sister-in-law of the Minister and daughter of the Chief Judge, she saw about her big marriage portion and her influential connections a perfect flock of waistcoats with their hearts outside.

While dancing with her, Lappara, greatly excited, declared that His Excellency had permitted him — but just there the waltz ended and she left him without listening to the rest and came toward Méjean, who did not dance and yet could not make up his mind to leave.

"What a face you make, most solemn man, man most reasonable!"

" The farandole ! The farandole ! "

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He took her by the hand: "Sit down here; I have something to say to you — by the authority of my Minister — "

Very much overcome, he smiled, and while noting the trembling of his lips Hortense understood and rose very quickly.

"No, no, not this evening — I can listen to nothing — I am dancing — "

She flew away on the arm of Rochemaure, who had just come to fetch her for the cotillion. He too was very much taken; just in order to imitate Lappara, the good young fellow ventured to pronounce a word which caused her to break out in a gale of gayety that went whirling with her round the entire room, and when the shawl figure was finished she went over toward her sister and whispered in her ear:

"Here we are in a nice mess! Here is Numa, who has promised me to each of his three secretaries!"

"Which one are you going to take?"

Her answer was cut short by the rolling of the tabor.

"The farandole! The farandole!"

It was a surprise for his guests from the Minister — the farandole to close the cotillion — the South to the last go! and so — *sou!* But how do people dance it? Hands meet each other and join and the two dancing-rooms come together this time. Bompard gravely explains: "This is the way, young ladies," and he cuts a caper.

And then, with Hortense at its head, the faran-

dole unrolls itself across the long rows of rooms, followed by Valmajour playing with a superb solemnity, proud of his success and of the looks which his masculine and robust figure in that original costume earn for him.

"Is n't he beautiful!" cried Roumestan, "is n't he handsome! a regular Greek shepherd!"

From room to room the rustic dance, more and more crowded and lively, follows and chases the spectre of Frayssinous. Reawakened to life by these airs from the ancient time, the figures on the great tapestries, copied from the pictures of Boucher and Lancret, agitate themselves and the little naked backs of the cupids who are rolling about along the frieze take on a movement in the eyes of the dancers as of a rushing hunt as wild and crazy as their own.

Away down there at the end of the vista Cadaillac has edged up to the buffet with a plate and a glass of wine in his hand; he listens, eats and drinks, penetrated to the very centre of his scepticism by that sudden heat of joy:

"Just remember this, my boy," said he to Boissaric, "you must always remain to the end at a ball. The women are prettier in their moist pallor, which does not reach the point of fatigue any more than that little white line there at the windows has reached the point of being daylight. There is a little music in the air, some dust that smells nicely, a semi-intoxication which refines a sensation and which one ought to savor as one eats a hot chicken wing washed down with cham-

pagne frappé. — There! just look at that, will you."

Behind the big mirror without a frame the farandole was lengthening out, with all arms stretched, into a chain alternate of black and light notes softened by the disorder of the toilets and hair and the mussiness that comes from two hours' dancing.

"Is n't that pretty, eh? — And the bully boy at the end there, is n't he smart!" Then he added coldly, as he put down his glass:

"All the same, he will never make a cent."

CHAPTER X.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

THERE never had been any great sympathy between President Le Quesnoy and his son-in-law. The lapse of time, frequent intercourse and the bonds of relationship had not been able to narrow the gap between these two natures, or to vanquish the intimidating coolness which the Provençal felt in the presence of this big, silent man, with his pale and haughty face, from whose height a steely-gray look, which was the look of Rosalie without her tenderness and indulgence, fell upon his lively nature with freezing effect. Numa, with his mobile and floating nature, always overwhelmed by his own conversation, at one and the same time a fiery and a complicated nature, was in a state of constant revolt against the logic, the uprightness, the rigidity of his father-in-law. And while he envied him these qualities, he placed them to the credit of the coldness of nature in this man of the North, that extreme North which the President represented to him.

"Beyond him, there 's the wild polar bear — beyond that, nothing at all — the north pole and death."

All the same he flattered the President, endeavored to cajole him with adroit, feline tricks, which

were his baits to catch the Gaul. But the Gaul, subtler than he was himself, would not permit himself to be taken in, and on Sunday, in the dining-room at the Place Royale, at the moment when politics were discussed, whenever Numa, softened by the good dinner, attempted to make old Le Quesnoy believe that in reality the two were very close to an understanding, because both wanted the same thing, namely, liberty — it was a sight to see the indignant toss of the head with which the President penetrated his armor.

"Oh! Not at all, not the same by any means!"

In half-a-dozen clear-cut, hard arguments, he established the distances between them, unmasked fine phrases and showed that he was not the man to be taken in by their humbuggery. Then the lawyer got out of the affair by joking, though extremely angry at bottom and particularly on account of his wife, who looked on and listened without ever mixing herself up with political talk. But then in the evening, while going home in the carriage, he took great pains to prove to her that her father was lacking in common-sense. Ah! if it had not been for her presence, how finely he would have put the President to his trumps! In order not to irritate him, Rosalie avoided taking part with either.

"Yes, it is unfortunate — you don't understand each other . . ." But in her own heart she agreed with the President.

When Roumestan arrived at a Minister's portfolio the coolness between the two men only be-

came greater. M. Le Quesnoy refused to show himself at his son-in-law's receptions in the Rue de Grenelle and he explained the matter very precisely to his daughter.

"Now, please tell your husband this — let him continue to visit me here, and as often as possible; I shall be most delighted. But you must not expect ever to see me at the Ministry. I know well enough what those people are preparing for us: I don't want to have the appearance of being an accomplice."

After all, the situation between them was saved in the eyes of society by that heartfelt sorrow, that mourning of the heart, which had imprisoned the Le Quesnoys in their own home for so many years. Probably the Minister of Public Instruction would have been very much embarrassed to feel the presence in his drawing-room of that sturdy old contradictor, in whose presence he always remained a little boy. Still, he made believe to appear wounded by that decision; he struck an attitude on account of it, a thing which is very precious to an actor, and he found a pretext for not coming to the Sunday dinners except very irregularly, making as a plea one of those thousand excuses, engagements, meetings, political banquets, which offer so wide a liberty to husbands in politics.

Rosalie, on the contrary, never missed a Sunday, arriving early in the afternoon, delighted to find again in the home circle of her parents that taste of the family which her official life hardly permit-

ted her the leisure to satisfy. Mme. Le Quesnoy being still at vespers and Hortense at church with her mother, or carried off to some musical matinée by friends, she was always certain to find her father in his library, a long room crammed from top to bottom with books. There he was, shut in with his silent friends, his intellectual intimates, the only ones with whom his sorrow had never found fault. The President did not seat himself to read; he passed the shelves in review, stopping in front of some finely bound books; standing there, unconscious what he did, he would read for an hour at a time without recognizing the passage of time or that he was weary. When he saw his eldest daughter enter, he would give a pale smile. After a few words were exchanged, because neither one nor the other was exactly garrulous, she also passed in review her beloved authors, choosing and turning over the leaves of some book in his immediate neighborhood in that somewhat dusky light of the big courtyard in the Marais, where the bells, sounding vespers near by, fell in heavy notes amidst the stillness that Sunday brings to the commercial quarters of a city. Sometimes he gave her an open book:

"Read that!" and put his finger under a passage; and when she had read it:

"That 's fine, is it not?"

There was no greater pleasure for that young woman, to whom life was offering whatever there was of brilliant and luxuriant things, than the hour passed beside that mournful and aged father in

whom her daughterly adoration was raised to a double power by other and intimate bonds altogether intellectual.

It was to him she owed the uprightness of her thought and that feeling for justice which made her so courageous; to him also her taste for the fine arts, her love of painting and of fine poetry — because with Le Quesnoy the continuous pettifoggery of the law had not succeeded in ossifying the man in him.

Rosalie loved her mother and venerated her, not without some little revolt against a nature which was too simple, too gentle, annihilated as it were in her own home; a nature which sorrow, that elevates certain souls, had crushed to the earth and forced into the most ordinary feminine occupations — into practical piety, into housekeeping in its smallest details. Although she was younger than her husband, she appeared to be the elder of the two, judged by her old woman's talk; she was like one rendered old and sorrowful, who searched all the warm corners of her memory and all the souvenirs of her infancy in a land hot with the sun of Provence. But above all things the church had taken possession of her; since the death of her son she was in the habit of going to church in order to put her sorrow to slumber in the silent freshness and half-light and half-noise of the lofty naves, as though it were in the peace of a cloister barred by heavy double gates against the roar of the outer life. This she did with that devout and cowardly egotism of sorrows which kneel upon

a *prie-Dieu* and are released from all anxieties and duties.

Rosalie, who was a young girl already at the moment of their mishap, had been struck by the very different way in which her parents suffered. Mme. Le Quesnoy, renouncing everything, was steeped in a tearful religion, but Le Quesnoy set out to obtain strength from daily work accomplished. Her tender preference for her father arose in her through the exercise of her reason. Marriage, life in common with all the exaggerations, lies and lunacies of her Southerner, caused her to feel the shelter of the silent library all the more pleasantly because it was a change from the grandiose, cold and official interior of the Ministry. In the midst of their quiet chat, the noise of a door was heard, a rustling of silk, and Hortense would enter.

"Ah, ha! I knew I should find you here!"

She did not love to read, Hortense did not. Even novels bored her; they were never romantic enough to suit her exalted frame of mind. After running up and down for about five minutes with her bonnet on, she would cry:

"How these old books and papers do smell stuffy! Don't you find it so, Rosalie? Come on, come a little with me! Papa has had you long enough. Now it's my turn."

And so she would carry her off to her bedroom, their bedroom; for Rosalie also had used it until she was twenty years old.

There, during an hour of delightful chat, she saw about her all those things which had been a

part of herself — her bed with cretonne curtains, her desk, her étagère, her library, where a bit of her childhood still lingered about the titles of the volumes and about the thousand childish things preserved with all due devotion. Here she found again her old thoughts lying about the corners of that young girl's bedroom, more coquettish and ornamented, it is true, than it was in her time. There was a rug on the floor; a night lamp in the shape of a flower hung from the ceiling and fragile little tables stood about for sewing or writing, against which one knocked at every step; there was more elegance and less order. Two or three pieces of work begun were hanging over the backs of the chairs and the open desk showed a windy scattering of note-paper with monograms. When you entered there was always a minute or two of trouble.

"O, it's the wind," said Hortense with a peal of laughter. "The wind knows I adore him; he must have come to see if I was at home."

"They must have left the window open," answered Rosalie quietly. "How can you live in such an interior? For my part I am not able to think if anything is out of place."

She rose to straighten the frame of a picture fastened to the wall; it irritated her eyes, which were as exact as her nature.

"O, well! it's just the contrary with me. It puts me in form. It seems to me that I am travelling."

This difference in their natures was reflected

on the faces of the two sisters. Rosalie had regular features with great purity in their lines, calm eyes of a color changing constantly like that of a deep lake; the other's features were very irregular, her expression clever, her complexion the pale tint of a Creole woman. There were the North and the South in the father and the mother, two very different temperaments which had united without merging together; each was perpetuating its own race in one of the children, and all this, notwithstanding the life in common, the similar education in a great boarding-school for young girls, where, under the same masters, and only a few years later, Hortense was taking up the scholastic tradition which had made of her sister an attentive, serious woman, always ready to the minute, absorbed in her smallest acts. That same education had left her tumultuous, fantastic, unsteady of soul and always in a hurry. Sometimes, when she saw her so agitated, Rosalie cried out:

"I must say I am very lucky; I have no imagination."

"As for me, I have n't anything else," said Hortense; and she reminded her how at boarding school, when M. Baudouy was given the task of teaching them style and the development of thought, during that course which he pompously termed his imagination class, Rosalie had never had any success, because she expressed everything in a few concise words, whereas she, on the other hand, given an idea as big as your nail, was able to blacken whole volumes with print.

"That's the only prize I ever got — the imagination prize!"

Despite it all they were a tenderly united couple, bound to each other by one of those affections between an elder and a younger sister into which an element of the filial and maternal enters. Rosalie took her about with her everywhere, to balls, to her friends' houses, on her shopping trips in which the taste of Parisian women is exercised; even after leaving the boarding-school she remained her younger sister's little mother. And now she is occupying herself with getting her married, with finding for her some quiet and trustworthy companion, indispensable for such a madcap as she is, the powerful arm which is needed to offset her enthusiasms.

It was plain that the man she meant was Méjean; but Hortense, who at first did not say no, suddenly showed an evident antipathy. They had a long talk about it the day following the ministerial reception, when Rosalie had detected the emotion and trouble of her sister.

"O, he is kind and I like him well enough," said Hortense, "he is one of those loyal friends such as one would like to have about one all one's life; but that is not the sort of husband that will do for me."

"Why?"

"You will laugh at me. He does not appeal to my imagination enough; there it is! A marriage with him — why it makes me think of the house of a burgher, right-angled and stiff, at the end of an

alley of trees which stand as straight as the letter I; and you know well enough that I love something else — the unexpected, surprises — "

"Well, who then? M. de Lappara?"

"Thank you! In order that I should be just a wee bit preferred to his tailor?"

"M. de Rochemaure?"

"What, that model red-tapist? — and I who have a perfect horror of red tape!"

And when the disquiet which Rosalie showed pushed her to the wall, for she wished to know everything and interrogated her closely:

"What I should like to do," said the young girl, while a faint flame like a fire in straw rose into the pallor of her complexion, "what I should like to do — " Then in a changed voice and with an expression of fun:

"I should like to marry Bompard! Yes, Bompard; he is the husband of my dreams — at any rate he has imagination, that fellow, and some resources against deadly dulness!"

She rose to her feet and passed up and down the room with that gait, a little inclined over, which made her seem even taller than her figure warranted. People did not recognize Bompard's worth; but what pride and what dignity of existence were his, and, with all his craziness, what logic!

"Numa wanted to give him a place in the office close to him; but he would not take it, he preferred to live in honor of his chimera. And people actually accuse the South of France of

being practical and industrious! — but there is the man to give that legend the lie. Why, look here — he was telling me this the other night at the ball — he is going to brood out ostrich eggs — an artificial brood machine — he is positive that he will make millions, — and he is far more happy than if he had those millions! Why, it is a perpetual life in fairy-land with a man of that sort. Let them give me Bompard; I want nobody but Bompard!"

"Well, well, I see I shall learn nothing more to day either," said the big sister to herself, who divined underneath these lively sallies something deep down below.

One Sunday when she reached her old home Rosalie found Mme. Le Quesnoy awaiting her in the vestibule, who told her with an air of mystery:

"There 's somebody in the drawing-room — a lady from the South."

"Aunt Portal?"

"You shall see —"

It was not Mme. Portal, but a saucy Provençal girl whose deep curtsy in the rustic way came to an end in a peal of laughter.

"Hortense!"

Her skirt reaching to the tops of her black shoes, her waist increased by the folds of tulle belonging to the big scarf, her face framed among the falling waves of hair kept in place by a little bonnet made of cut velvet and embroidered with butterflies in jet, Hortense looked very like the *chatos* whom one sees on Sunday practising their

coquetries on the Tilting Field at Arles, or else walking, two and two, with lowered lashes, through the pretty columns of St. Trophyme cloisters, whose denticulated architecture goes very well with those ruddy Saracen reds and with the ivory color of the church in which a flame of a consecrated candle trembles in the full daylight.

"Just see how pretty she is!" said her mother, standing in ecstasy before that lively personification of the land of her youthful days. Rosalie, on the other hand, shuddered with an inexplicable sadness, as if that costume had taken her sister far, far away from her.

"Well, that is a fantastic idea! It is very becoming to you, but I like you far better as a Parisian girl. And who dressed you so well?"

"Audiberte Valmajour. She has just gone out."

"How often she comes here!" said Rosalie, going into their room to take off her bonnet. "What a friendship it is! I shall begin to get jealous."

Hortense excused herself, a little bit embarrassed; this head-dress from Provence gave so much pleasure to their mother in the sober house.

"Is it not true, mother?" cried she, going from one room into the other. "Besides, that poor girl feels so outlandish in Paris and is so interesting with her blind devotion to the genius of her brother."

"Oh! Genius, is it?" said the big sister, tossing her head a bit.

"What! You saw it yourself the other night at your house, the effect it produced — everywhere just the same thing!"

And when Rosalie answered that one must estimate at their real value these successes won in the world of society and due to politeness, a caprice of an evening, the last fad:

"Well, I don't care, he is in the opera!"

The velvet band on the little head-dress bristled up in sign of revolt, as if it were really covering one of those enthusiastic heads above whose profile it floats, down there in Provence. Besides, the Valmajours were not peasants like others, but the last remnants of a reduced family of nobles.

Rosalie, standing in front of the tall mirror, turned about laughing:

"What! You believe in that legend?"

"Why, of course I do. They descend in direct line from the Princes des Baux. There are the parchments and there are the coats of arms at their rustic doorway. Any day that they should wish — "

Rosalie shuddered. Behind the peasant who played the flute there was the prince besides. Given a strong imagination — and that might become dangerous.

"None of that story is true," and this time she did not laugh any more. "In the district of Aps there are ten families bearing that so-called princely name. Anybody who told you otherwise told a falsehood through vanity or through — "

"But it was Numa — it was your husband. The

other night at the Ministry he gave us all sorts of details."

"O! You know how it is with him—you have got to consider the focus, as he says himself."

Hortense was not listening. She had gone back into the drawing-room, and, seated at the piano, she began in a loud voice:

"Mount' as passa ta matinado,
Mourbieù, Marioun . . ."

It was an old popular ballad of Provence, sung to an air as grave as a church recitative, that Numa had taught his sister-in-law; one that he enjoyed hearing her sing with her Parisian accent, which, sliding over the Southern articulations, made one think of Italian spoken by an Englishwoman.

"Où as-tu passé ta matinée, morbleu, Marion?
A la fontaine chercher de l'eau, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Quel est celui qui te parlait, morbleu, Marion?
C'est une de mes camarades, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Les femmes ne portent pas les brayes, morbleu, Marion.
C'est sa robe entortillée, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Les femmes ne portent pas l'épée, morbleu, Marion.
C'est sa quenouille qui pendait, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Les femmes ne portent pas les moustaches, morbleu, Marion.
C'est des mûres qu'elle mangeait, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Le mois de mai ne porte pas de mûres, morbleu, Marion.
C'était une branche de l'automne, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Va m'en chercher une assiettée, morbleu, Marion.
Les petits oiseaux les ont toutes mangées, mon Dieu, mon ami.
Marion! . . . je te couperai ta tête, morbleu, Marion.
Et puis que ferez-vous du reste, mon Dieu, mon ami?
Je le jetterai par la fenêtre, morbleu, Marion,
Les chiens, les chats en feront fête. . . ."

She interrupted herself in order to fling out his words with the gesture and intonation that Numa used when he got excited. "There, look you, me children! 't is as foine as Shakespeare."

"Yes, a picture of manners and customs," said Rosalie, coming up to her, "the husband gross and brutal, the wife catlike and mendacious — a true household in Provence!"

"Oh, my dear child," said Mme. Le Quesnoy, in a tone of gentle reproof, the tone that is used when ancient quarrels have become the habit. The piano-stool whisked quickly around and brought face to face with Rosalie the cap of the furious little Provence girl.

"'T is really too much! what harm has it ever done to you, our South? as for me, I adore it! I did not know it at the time, but that voyage you made me take revealed to me my real country. It is no use to have been baptized at St. Paul's; I belong down there, I do — I am a child of the 'little square.' Do you know, Mamma, some one of these days we will just leave these cold Northeners planted right here, and we two will go down to live in our beautiful South, where people sing and dance — the South of the winds, of the sun, of the mirage, of everything that makes one poetic and widens one's life —

'It is there I would wish to dw-e-e-ll.'"

Her two agile hands fell back upon the piano, scattering the end of her dream in a tumult of resounding notes.

"And not one word about the tabor-player!" thought Rosalie. "That's a serious thing!"

It was a good deal more serious than she imagined.

From the day when Audiberte had seen Mlle. Le Quesnoy fasten a flower on the tabor of her brother, from that very moment there arose in her ambitious soul a splendid vision of the future, which had not been without its effect on their transplantation to Paris. The reception which Hortense gave her, when she came to complain about her brother's obstination in running after Numa, defined and strengthened her in her still vague hope. And since then, gradually, without opening her mind to her men-folks otherwise than through half words, she prepared the path with the duplicity of the peasant woman who is nearly an Italian, gliding and crawling forward. From her seat in the kitchen in the Place Royale, where she began by waiting timidly in a corner on the edge of a chair, she crept into the drawing-room and installed herself, always neat and trig, in the position of a poor relation.

Hortense was crazy about her, showed her to her friends as if she were a pretty piece of bric-à-brac brought from that land of Provence which she always spoke of with enthusiasm. And the other girl played herself off as more simple than nature allows, exaggerated her savage rages, her tirades of wrath with clenched fist against the muddy sky of Paris, and would often use a charming little exclamation, *Boudiou*, the effect of which

she arranged and watched like a kittenish girl on the stage. The President himself had smiled at this *Boudiou*, and just to think of having made the President smile!

But it was in the young girl's bedroom, when they were alone, that she put all her tricks in play. All of a sudden she would kneel at her feet, would seize her hand, go into ecstasies over the smallest points of her toilet, her way of making a bow in a ribbon, her manner of dressing her hair, letting slip those heavy compliments directly in her face, which give great pleasure all the same, so spontaneous and naïve do they appear.

Oh, when the young lady stepped out of the carriage in front of the *mas* [the farm-house], she thought she saw the queen of the angels in person! and she was for a time speechless at the sight, and her brother, *pécaïré*, when he heard on the stones of the descending road the noise of the carriage which took back the little Parisian, he said it was as if those stones, one by one, were falling on his heart. She played a great rôle with regard to this brother, his pride and his anxieties —his anxieties, now why? I just ask you why— since that reception at the "Menistry" he was being talked about in all the papers and his portrait was seen everywhere and such invitations as he got in the Faubourg Saint-Germoine —why he could n't meet them all! Duchesses, countesses, wrote him notes on splendid paper— they had coronets on their letters just like those on the carriages which they sent to bring him in; and

still — well, no, he was n't happy, the "pore" man! All these things whispered in Hortense's ear gave her some share of the fever and magnetic will-power of the peasant girl. Then, without looking at Audiberte, she asked if perhaps Valmajour did not have down there in Provence a betrothed who was waiting for him.

"He a betrothed? — *avaï!* you do not know him — he has much too much belief in himself to desire a peasant girl. The richest girls have been on his track, the Des Combette girl, and then still another, and a lot of gay ladies — you know what I mean! He did not even look at them. Who knows what it is he is revolving in his head? Oh, these artists — "

And that word, a new one for her, assumed on her ignorant lips an expression hard to define, somewhat like the Latin spoken at mass, or some cabalistic formula picked up in a book of magic. The heritage which would come from Cousin Puyfourcat returned again and again during the course of this adroit gossip.

There are very few families in the South of France, whether artisans or burghers, who do not possess a Cousin Puyfourcat, an adventurer who has departed in early youth in search of fortune and has never written since, whom they love to imagine enormously rich. He is like a lottery ticket running for an indefinite time, a chimerical vista opening up fortune and hope in the distance, which at last they end by taking for a fact. Audiberte believed firmly in the fortune of that cousin

and she talked about it to the young girl, less for the purpose of dazzling her than in order to diminish the social gap which separated them. When Puyfourcat should die, her brother was to buy Valmajour back again, cause the castle to be rebuilt and his patent of nobility acknowledged, because everybody said that the necessary papers were extant.

At the close of such chats as these, which were sometimes prolonged deep into the twilight, Hortense remained for a long time silent, her forehead pressed against the pane, and saw the high towers of that reconstructed castle as they lifted themselves in the rose-colored winter sunset, the terrace shining with torches and resounding with concerts in honor of the chatelaine.

"*Boudiou*, how late it is," cried the peasant girl, seeing that she had brought her to the point where she desired, "and the dinner for my men is not ready yet! I must fly!"

Very often Valmajour came and waited for her downstairs; but she never allowed him to come upstairs. She felt that he was so awkward and coarse, and cold, besides, toward any idea of flattering. She had no use for him yet.

Somebody who was very much in her way, too, but difficult to escape, was Rosalie, with whom her feline ways and her false innocency did not take at all. In her presence Audiberte, her terrible black brows knit across her forehead, did not say a single word; and in that Southern silence there rose up along with the racial hatred that anger of

the weak person, underhand and vindictive, which turns against the obstacle most dangerous to its projects. Her real grievance was Rosalie, but she talked about quite other ones to her little sister. For example, Rosalie did not like tabor-playing; then "she did not do her religious duties — and a woman who does not do her religion, you know . . ." Audiberte did her religion and in the most tremendous way; she never missed a single mass and she went to communion on the proper days. But all that did not hinder in any way her actions; intriguer, liar and hypocrite as she was, violent to the verge of crime, she drew from the Bible texts nothing but excuses for vengeance and hatred. Only she kept her honor in the feminine sense of the word. With her twenty-eight years and her pretty face, in those low quarters where the Valmajours were moving nowadays, she preserved the severe chastity of her thick peasant's scarf, bound about a heart which had never beat with any emotion beside ambition for her brother.

. . . . . .

"Hortense makes me anxious — look at her there."

Rosalie, to whom her mother whispered this confidentially in a corner of the drawing-room at the Ministry, thought that Mme. Le Quesnoy shared her own anxiety, but the observation made by the mother referred merely to the physical condition of Hortense, who had not been able to cure herself of a bad cold. Rosalie looked at her sister; always the same dazzling complexion, liveliness

and gayety; she coughed a little, but what of that? only as all Parisian girls do after the ball season! The summer would certainly put her back again in good shape very quickly.

"And have you spoken to Jarras about her?"

Jarras was a friend of Roumestan, one of the old boys of the Café Malmus. He assured her that it was nothing and suggested a course at the waters of Arvillard.

"All right, then; you must get off quickly," said Rosalie with vivacity, delighted with this pretext of getting Hortense away.

"Yes, but there is your father, who would be alone —"

"I will go and see him every day —"

Then, sobbing, the poor mother acknowledged the horror which such a trip with her daughter caused her. During an entire year it had been necessary for her to run from one watering place to another for the sake of the child they had already lost. Was it possible that she would have to begin again the same pilgrimage, with the same frightful results in prospect? And the other, too, — the disease had seized him at the age of twenty, in his full health, in his full powers —

"Oh Mamma, do be quiet!"

And Rosalie scolded her gently: Come, now; Hortense was not ill; the doctor said that the trip would only be a pleasure party; Arvillard, in the Alps of Dauphiny, was a marvellous country; she herself would like nothing better than to accompany Hortense in her mother's place;

unfortunately, she could not do it. Reasons most serious —

"Yes, yes. I understand — your husband, the Ministry — "

"O, no. It is n't that at all!"

And to her mother, in that nearness of heart which they so seldom found affecting them: "Listen, then, but for you alone — nobody knows it, not even Numa . . ." she acknowledged a still very fragile hope of a great happiness which she had quite despaired of, the happiness which made her wild with joy and fear, the entirely new hope of a baby who might perhaps be born to them.

CHAPTER XI.

A WATERING-PLACE.

ARVILLARD LES BAINS,
2d August, '76.

"WELL, it is queer enough, this place from which I am writing to you. Imagine a square hall, very lofty, paved with stones, done in stucco work — a sonorous hall, where the daylight falling through two enormous windows is veiled down to the lowest pane with blue curtains and further obscured by a sort of floating vapor, having a taste of sulphur in it, which clings to one's clothes and tarnishes one's gold ornaments. In this hall are people seated near the walls, on benches, chairs and stools round little tables — people who look at their watches every minute, get up and go out, leaving their seats to others, letting one see each time through the half-open door a mob of bathers moving about in the brightly lit vestibule and the flowing white aprons of the serving women who dash here and there. In spite of all this movement, no noise, but a continual murmur of conversation in low voices, newspapers being unfolded, badly oxidized pens scratching on paper, a solemnity as in a church — the whole place bathed and refreshed by the big stream of mineral water

arranged in the middle of the hall, the rush of which breaks itself against a disk of metal, is crushed to pieces, separates in jets and turns to powder above the great basins placed one upon the other and all dripping with moisture. This is the inhalation hall.

"I must let you know, my dear girl, that everybody does not inhale in the same way. For instance, the old gentleman who sits in front of me at this moment follows the prescriptions of the doctor to the letter, for I recognize them all. Our feet placed upon a stool and our chest pushed forward, let us pull in our elbows and keep our mouth open all the time to make the inspiration easy. Poor, dear man! How he does inhale, with what a confidence in the result! What little round eyes he has, credulous and devout, which seem to be saying to the spring:

"'O spring of Arvillard, cure me well; see how I inhale you, see what faith I have in you —'

"Then we have the skeptic, who inhales without inhaling, his back bent, shrugging his shoulders and rolling up his eyes. Then there are the discouraged ones, the people who are really sick and feel the uselessness and nothingness of all this. One poor lady, my neighbor, I see putting her finger quickly to her mouth every little while to see if her glove is not stained at the tip with a red blot. But, all the same, people find some means to be gay. Ladies who belong in the same hotel push their chairs near to each other, form groups, do their embroidery, gossip in a low voice,

discuss the newspaper of the baths and the list of strangers just arrived. Young persons bring out their English novels in red covers, priests read their breviaries — there are a great many priests at Arvillard, particularly missionaries with big beards, yellow faces, voices hoarse from having preached so long the word of God. As to me, you know I don't care about novels, particularly those novels of to-day in which everything happens just like things in everyday life. So for my part I take up my correspondence with two or three designated victims — Marie Tournier, Aurélie Dansaert and you, great big sister whom I adore! Look out for regular journals! Just think, two hours of inhalation in four times, and that every day! Nobody here inhales as much as I do, which is as much as saying that I am a real phenomenon. People look at me a good deal for this reason and I have no little pride in it.

"As to the rest of the treatment — nothing else except the glass of mineral water which I go and drink at the spring in the morning and evening, and which ought to triumph over the obstinate veil which this horrid cold has thrown over my voice. There is the special point of the Arvillard waters and for that reason the singers and songstresses make this place their rendezvous. Handsome Mayol has just left us, with his vocal cords entirely renewed. Mlle. Bachellery, whom you remember — the little diva at your reception — has found herself so well in consequence of the treatment that after having finished three regular

weeks she has begun three more, wherefore doth the newspaper of the baths bestow upon her great praise. We have the honor of dwelling in the same hotel with that young and illustrious person, adorned with a tender Bordeaux mother, who at the *table d'hôte* advertises 'good appetites' in the salad and talks of the one-hundred-and-forty-franc bonnet which her young lady wore at the last Longchamps races — a delicious couple, and greatly admired among us all! We go into ecstasies over the childish graces of Bébé, as her mother calls her, over her laughter, her trills, the tossings of her short skirt. We crowd together in front of the sanded courtyard of the hotel in order to see her do her game of croquet with the little girls and little boys — she will play with none but the little ones — to see her run and jump and send her ball like a real street boy.

"'Look out, I'm going to roquet you, Master Paul!'

"Everybody says of her, 'What a child she is!' As for me, I believe that those false childish ways are a part of a rôle which she is playing, just like her skirts with big bows on them and her hair looped up postillon-style. Then she has such an extraordinary way of kissing that great big Bordeaux woman, of suspending herself to her neck, of allowing herself to be cradled and held in her lap before all the world! You know well enough how caressing I am — well, honor bright! it makes me feel embarrassed when I kiss mamma.

"A very singular family, too, but less amusing,

consists of the Prince and Princess of Anhalt, of Mademoiselle their daughter, and the governess, chamber-women and suite, who occupy the entire first floor of the hotel and are the grand personages thereof. I often meet the princess on the stair going up step by step on the arm of her husband — a handsome gallant, bursting with health under his military hat turned up with blue. She never goes to the bathing-hall except in a sedan chair and it is heartrending to see that wrinkled and pale face behind the little pane of the chair; father and child walk at the side, the child very wretched-looking, with all the features of her mother and very likely also all of her malady. This little creature, eight years old, who is not allowed to play with the other children and who looks down sadly from the balcony on the games of croquet and the riding-parties at the hotel, bores herself to death. They think that her blood is too blue for such common joys and prefer to keep her in the gloomy atmosphere of that dying mother, by the side of that father who shows his sick wife to the public with an impudent and worn-out face, or give the child over to the servants.

"But heavens, it's a kind of pest, it's an infectious disease, this nobility business! These people take their meals by themselves in a little dining-room; they inhale by themselves — because there are separate halls for families — and you can imagine the mournfulness of that companionship — that woman and the little girl together in a great silent vault!

"The other evening we were together in considerable number in the big room on the ground floor where the guests unite to play little games, sing and even occasionally to dance. Mamma Bachellery had just accompanied Bébé in a cavatina from an opera — you know 'we' want to enter the opera; in fact, we have come to Arvillard to 'cure up our voice for that' according to the elegant expression of the mother. All of a sudden the door opened and the princess made her appearance, with that grand air which is her own — near her end but elegant, wrapped in the lace mantle which hides the terrible and significant narrowness of her shoulders. The little girl and the father followed.

"'Go on, I beg of you —' coughed the poor woman.

"And would you believe it? that idiot of a little singer must choose out all of her repertory the most harrowing, the most sentimental ballad '*Vorrei morir*,' something like our 'Dying Leaves' in Italian, a ballad of a sick woman who fixes the date of her death in autumn, in order to give herself the illusion that all nature will die along with her, enveloped in the first autumnal fog as in a winding sheet!

> "'*Vorrei morir nella stagion dell' anno.*'
> (Oh! let me pass away when dies the year.)

"It is a graceful air, but with a sadness in it which is increased by the caressing sound of the Italian words; and there in the middle of that big

drawing-room, into which penetrated all sorts of perfumes through the open window, the little breezes, too, and the freshness of a fine summer night, this longing to live on until autumn, this truce and surcease asked of the malady took on something too poignant to bear. Without saying a word, the princess stood up and quickly left the room. In the shadows of the garden I heard a sob, one long sob, then the voice of a man scolding, and then those tearful complaints which a child makes when it sees its mother sorrowing.

"That is the mournfulness of such watering-places: these miseries concerning health which meet one everywhere, these persistent coughs scarcely deadened by the hotel partitions, these precautions taken with handkerchiefs pressed upon the mouth in order to keep off the air, these chats and confidences, the miserable meaning of which one divines from the hand moving toward the chest or toward the back near the shoulder-blade, from the sleepy manner, the dragging gait and the fixed idea of misfortune.

"Mamma, poor mamma, who knows the stages in sickness of the lungs, says that at Eaux-Bonnes or at Mont Dore it is a very different thing from what it is here. To Arvillard people send only convalescents like myself or else desperate cases for which nothing can do any more good. Luckily at our hotel Alpes Dauphinoises we have only three sick persons of that sort, the princess and two young Lyon people, brother and sister, orphans and very rich, they say, who

appear to be on their last legs; especially the sister, with that pallid complexion of the Lyon women, as if seen under water; she 's wound up in morning gowns and knit shawls, without one jewel or ribbon — not a single glimpse of coquetry about her!

"She looks poverty-stricken, that rich girl; she is certainly lost and she knows it; she is in despair and abandons herself to despair. On the other hand, in the bent figure of the young man, tightly squeezed into a fashionable jacket, there is a certain terrible determination to live, an incredible force of resistance to the malady.

"'My sister has no spring in her — but I have plenty!' said he the other day at the *table d'hôte*, in a voice quite eaten away, which is as difficult to hear as the *ut* note of Vauters the diva when she sings. And the fact is, he does have springs in the most surprising way; he is the make-fun of the hotel, the organizer of games, card-parties and excursions; he goes out riding and driving in sleds, that kind of little sled laden with fagots on which the mountaineers of this country toboggan you down the steepest slopes; he waltzes and fences, shaken with the terrible spasms of coughing which never stop him for a moment.

"We have, beside, a medical luminary here — you remember him — Dr. Bouchereau, the man whom mamma went to consult about our poor Andrew. I do not know whether he has recognized us, but he never bowed — a regular old bear!

"I have just come from drinking my half-glass of water at the spring. This precious spring is ten minutes away, as one ascends in the direction of the high peak, in a gorge where a torrent all feathery with foam rolls and thunders, having come from the glacier which closes the view, a glacier shining and clear between the blue Alps that seems to be forever crumbling and dissolving its invisible and snowy base into that white mass of beaten water. Great black rocks dripping constantly among the ferns and lichens, the groves of pine and a dark green foliage, a soil in which spicules of mica glitter in the coal dust — that is the place; but something that I cannot express to you is the tremendous noise of the torrent tearing among the stones and of the steam-hammer of a lumber mill, which the water sets in action; and then, besides, in this narrow gorge, on its single road, which is always crowded, there are coal-carts, long files of mules, riding parties of excursionists and the water drinkers going and coming. I forgot to mention the apparition at the doors of wretched dwellings of some horrible male or female cretin, displaying a hideous goitre, a great big idiotic face with an open and grumbling mouth! Cretinism is one of the products of the country; it seems that Nature here is too strong for human beings and that the minerals and the rest — copper, iron and sulphur — seize, strangle and suffocate them; that that water flowing from the peaks chills them as it does those wretched trees which one sees growing all dwarfed between two crags.

There 's another of those impressions made upon a new arrival, the mournfulness and horror of which disappear in the course of a few days.

"For now, instead of flying from them, I have my special pet sufferers from goitre, one in particular, a frightful little monster, perched on the border of the road in a chair fit for a child of three years old; but he is sixteen, exactly the age of Mlle. Bachellery. When I near him, he dodders about his head, as heavy as a stone, and gives forth a hoarse cry, a crushed cry without understanding and without style; and as soon as he has received his piece of silver, he raises it in triumph toward a charcoal-woman, who is watching him from the corner of a window. He is a piece of good fortune envied by a great many mothers, for this hideous creature takes in, by himself alone, more than his three brothers do, who are at work at the furnaces of La Debout. His father does nothing at all; afflicted with consumption, he passes the winter by his poor man's hearth and in summer installs himself on a bench with other unhappy ones in the warm mist which the hot springs create as they pour forth.

"The young lady of the springs, in her white apron and with dripping hands, fills the glasses which are held out to her, as they come along, while in the courtyard near by, separated from the road by a low wall, heads are seen, the bodies of which one cannot perceive, heads thrown backward, contorted with their efforts, grinning in the sunshine, their mouths wide open; 't is an illus-

tration for the Inferno of Dante: the sinners damned to gargling!

"Sometimes, when we leave, we go the big round while returning to the establishment and descend by the country way. Mamma, whom the noise of the hotel fatigues and who particularly fears lest I should dance too much in the drawing-room, had indulged the dream of hiring a little house in Arvillard, where there is plenty of choice at every door; on every story there are bills, which flutter among the potted plants between the fresh and tempting curtains. One asks oneself what on earth becomes of the inhabitants during the season; do they camp in bands on the surrounding mountains, or do they go and live in the hotel at fifty francs a day? It would surprise me if it were so, for that magnet which they carry in their eye when they look at the bather seems to me terribly rapacious — there is something in it which glitters and catches hold.

"Yes, that same shining something, that sudden gleam on the forehead of my little boy with the goitre, reflected from his piece of silver — I find it everywhere; on the spectacles of the little nervous doctor who auscults me every morning, in the eyes of the good sugarly-sweet ladies who ask you in to examine their houses, their most convenient little gardens, crammed with holes full of water and kitchens on the ground floor to serve the apartments in the third story; in the eyes of carmen with their short blouses and lacquered hats decked with big ribbons, who make signs to you from the

boxes of their carryalls; in the look cast by the donkey-boy standing in front of the wide-open barn in which long ears switch to and fro; yes, even in the glances of these donkeys, in their long look of obstinacy and gentleness, I have seen that metallic hardness which the love of money gives; I have seen it, it exists.

"After all, their houses are frightful, huddled together and mournful, having no outlook, full of disagreeable points of all kinds which are impossible to ignore, because your attention has been drawn to them in the house next door. Decidedly we shall stick to our caravansary, the Alpes Dauphinoises, which lies hot in the sun on its height and steeps its red bricks and uncountable green shutters in the middle of an English park not yet of age, a park with hedges, labyrinth and sanded roads, the enjoyment of which it shares with five or six other overgrown hotels of the country — La Chevrette, La Laita, Le Bréda, La Planta.

"All these hotels with Savoy names are in a state of ferocious rivalry; they spy upon each other, watch each other across the copses, and there is a merry war as to which shall put on the most style with its bells, its pianos, the whip-cracking of its postilions, its expenditure of fireworks; or which one shall throw its windows widest open in order that the animation there, the laughter, songs and dances shall appeal to the visitors lodged in the opposite hotel and make them say:

"'How they do amuse themselves down there! What a lot of people they must have!'

"But the place where the hottest battle goes on between the rival taverns is in the columns of the *Bathers' Gazette*, where those lists of new arrivals are printed, which the little sheet gives with minute exactness, twice a week.

"What envious rage at the Laita or the Planta when, for example, they read:

"'*Prince and Princess of Anhalt and their suite, . . . Alpes Dauphinoises.*'

"Everything becomes colorless in the light of that crushing line. What response can there be? They rack their brains; they try their wits; if you are possessed of a *de* or some title, they drag it out and flaunt it. Why, here 's La Chevrette has been serving us up the very same Inspector of Forests three times under as many different species, as Inspector, as Marquis, and as Chevalier of Saints Maurice and Lazarus; but the Alpes Dauphinoises is still wearing the cockade, though you may be sure it is not on our account. Great heavens! You know how retiring mamma always is, and afraid of her shadow; well, she took good care to forbid Fanny saying who we were, because the position of papa and that of your husband might have drawn about us too much idle curiosity and social riffraff. The newspaper said merely *Mesdames Le Quesnoy de Paris, . . . Alpes Dauphinoises;* and as Parisians are few and far between our incognito has not been unveiled.

"We are very simply arranged, but comfortably enough — two rooms on the second floor, the whole valley lying before us, an amphitheatre of moun-

tains black with pine woods far below — mountains which show various shades and get lighter and lighter as they rise with their streaks of eternal snow; barren steeps close upon little farms which look like squares in green and yellow and rose, among which the haycocks look no larger than bee-hives.

"But this beautiful landscape does little to keep us in our rooms. In the evening there is the drawing-room, in the day time we wander through the park to carry out the treatment. In connection with an existence so full and yet so empty, the treatment takes hold of and absorbs you. The amusing hour is the one after breakfast, when groups are formed about the little tables for coffee under the big lime-tree at the entrance of the garden; this is the hour for arrivals and departures. People exchange good-byes and shake hands about the carriage which is taking off the bathers; the hotel people press forward, their eyes brilliant with that shiny look, that famous sheen of the Savoyard; we kiss people whom we hardly know; handkerchiefs are waved; the horse-bells jangle, and then the heavy and crowded wagon disappears, swaying along the narrow road on the side of the hill, carrying off with it those names and faces which for a moment have made a part of our life in common, those faces unknown yesterday and to-morrow forgot.

"Others come and install themselves after their own fashion. I imagine that this is like the monotony of packet-ships, with the change of faces at

every port. All this going and coming amuses me, but poor dear mamma continues to be very sorrowful, very much absorbed, in spite of the smile which she tries to give when I look at her. I can guess that every detail of our lives brings with it for her a heartrending souvenir, a memory of the gloomiest images. Poor thing, she saw so many of those caravansaries of sick people during that year when she followed her poor dying boy from stage to stage, in the lowlands or on the mountains, beneath the pines or at the edge of the sea, with hope always deceived and that eternal resignation which she was ever obliged to show during her martyrdom.

"I do think that Jarras might have arranged to save her from the memory of this sorrow; for as for me, I am not sick, I cough hardly at all, and with the exception of my disgusting huskiness, which leaves me with a voice fit for crying vegetables in the street, I have never been so well in my life. A real devilish appetite, would you believe it? fits of hunger so terrible that I can hardly wait for a meal! Yesterday, after a breakfast with thirty dishes, with a menu more involved than the Chinese alphabet, I saw a woman stemming raspberries before our door. All of a sudden a desire seized me; two bowls full, my dear girl, two bowls full of the great big fresh raspberries, 'the fruit of the country,' as our waiter calls them, and there you have my appetite!

"All the same, my dear, how lucky it is that neither you nor I have taken the malady of that poor brother of ours, whom I hardly knew and

whose discouraged expression, which is shown on his portrait in our parents' chamber, comes back to me here, when I see other faces with their drawn features! And what an odd fish is this doctor who formerly took care of him, this famous Bouchereau! The other day mamma wanted to present me to him; in order to obtain a consultation with him we prowled around the park in the neighborhood of the old, long-legged fellow with his brutal and harsh face. But he was very much surrounded by the Arvillard doctors, who were listening to him with all the humbleness of pupils. Then we waited for him at the close of the inhalation; all our labor in vain! The fellow set off walking at such a pace that it seemed as if he wished to avoid us. You know with mamma one does not get over ground fast; so we missed him again this time. Finally, yesterday morning, Fanny went on our part to ask of his housekeeper if he could receive us; he sent back word that he was at the baths to care for his own health and not to give medical advice! There 's a boor for you! It is quite true that I have never seen such a pallor as he presents; it is like wax; papa is a highly-colored gentleman by the side of him. He lives only upon milk, never comes down to the dining-room and still less to the drawing-room. Our little nervous doctor, the one whom I call M. That's-what-you-need, will have it that he is the victim of a very dangerous heart malady and it is only the waters of Arvillard which have for the past three years permitted him to stay alive.

"'That 's what you need! That 's what you need!'

"That is all that one can make out in the babble of this funny little man, as vain as he is garrulous, who whirls round our apartments every morning.

"'Doctor, I don't sleep — I believe this treatment agitates me' . . . 'That 's what you need!' 'Doctor, I am always so sleepy — I think it must be that mineral water.' . . . 'That 's what you need!'

"What he seems to need more than anything else is that his tour of visits should be made quickly, in order that he may be at his consultation office before ten o'clock, in that little fly-box where the patients are crammed together as far out as the stairs and down the steps as far as the curb-stone. And I can tell you he does n't loaf much, but whips you off a prescription without stopping for one moment his jumping and prancing, like a bather who is trying to get his 'reaction.'

"O, yes, that reaction! That 's another story, too. As for me, I shall take neither baths nor douches, so I don't make my reaction, but I remain sometimes a quarter of an hour under the lindens of the park, looking at the march up and down of all these people who walk with long, regular steps and a deeply absorbed look, passing each other without saying one word. My old gentleman of the inhalation hall, the man who trys to propitiate the springs, carries on this exercise with the same punctuality and conscientious-

ness. At the entrance to the shaded walk he comes to a full stop, shuts his white umbrella, turns down the collar of his coat, looks at his watch, and — forward, march! Each leg stiff, elbows to his side, one, two! one, two! as far as the long pencil of white light which the absence of a tree, forming there an opening, throws across the alley at that point. He never goes farther than that, raises his arms three times as if he had dumb-bells in his hands, then returns in the same fashion, brandishes dumb-bells once more, and does this for fifteen turns, one after the other. I have an idea that the department for the crazy people at Charenton must have somewhat the same features that my alley presents about eleven o'clock in the morning."

6 August.

"So it is true, after all, Numa is coming to see us? O, how delighted I am! how delighted I am! Your letter has just come by the one o'clock mail which is distributed at the office of the hotel. It is a solemn moment which is decisive of the hue and color of the entire day. The office is crammed and people arrange themselves in a semicircle around fat Mme. Laugeron, who is very imposing in her morning gown of blue flannel, whilst in her authoritative voice with a bit of manner in it, the voice of a former lady's companion, she reads off the many-colored addresses of the mail. At the call each one advances, and it is my duty to tell you that we put a certain amount of personal pride in having a big mail. In what does one not

show some personal pride, for the matter of that, during this perpetual rubbing shoulders of vanities and of follies? Just to think that I should reach the point of being proud of my two hours of inhalation!

"'The Prince of Anhalt — M. Vasseur — Mlle. Le Quesnoy—' Deceived again! it is only my fashion journal. 'Mlle. Le Quesnoy —' I give a glance to see if there is nothing more for me and skip with your dear letter away down to the end of the garden, where there is a bench surrounded by big walnuts.

"Here it is — this is my own bench, the corner where I go to be alone in order to dream and build my Spanish castles; for it is a singular thing that in order to invent well and to develop oneself intellectually according to the precepts laid down by M. Baudouy, I do not need very wide horizons. If my landscape is too big, I lose myself in it, I scatter myself, t is all up with me. The only bore about my bench is the neighborhood of the swing, where that little Bachellery girl passes half her day in letting herself be swung into space by the young man who believes in having springs. I should think he must have plenty of spring in order to push her that way by the hour together; at every moment come babyish cries and musical roulades: 'Higher, higher yet, a little more —'

"Heavens! How that girl does get on my nerves! I wish that swing would pass her off and up into a cloud and that she would never come back again!

"Things are so nice upon my bench, so far away, when she is not there! I have thoroughly enjoyed your letter, the postscript of which made me utter a cry of delight.

"O, blessed be Chambéry and its new college and that corner-stone to be laid, which brings the Minister of Public Instruction into our district. He will be very comfortable here for the preparation of his speech, either walking about our shady alley, the 'reaction alley,' (come, that was n't bad for a pun!) or else beneath my walnuts, when Miss Bachellery is not scaring them with her cries. My dear Numa! I get on so well with him; he is so lively, so gay! How we shall chat together about our Rosalie and the serious motive which prevents her from travelling at this time — O great Heavens, that was a secret! — and poor mamma, who has made me swear so often about it! she is the one who will be glad enough to see dear Numa again. On this occasion she quite lost every sort of timidity or modesty; you ought to have seen the majesty with which she entered the office of the hotel in order to take an apartment for her son-in-law, the Minister! O, what fun, the face of our landlady hearing this news!

"'Why — what — my ladies, you are — you were —?'

"'Yes, we were — yes, we are —'

"Her broad face turned lilac and poppy-colored —a very palette for an impressionist painter. And so with M. Laugeron and the entire hotel service. Since our arrival we have been demanding an extra

candlestick in vain; now there are five on the chimneypiece. I can promise you that Numa will be well served and installed; they will give him the first story, occupied by the Prince of Anhalt, which will be vacant in three days. It appears that the waters of Arvillard are bad for the princess; and even the little doctor himself believes it is better that she should leave as quickly as possible. That is what is best — because if a tragedy should occur the Alpes Dauphinoises would never recover from the blow.

"It is really pitiable, the hurry there is about the departure of these wretched people, the way they edge them off, the way they shove them along in consequence of that magnetic hostility which places seem to exhale where a person is no longer wanted. Poor Princess of Anhalt, whose arrival here was made such a festival! a little more and they would have her conducted to the borders of the department between two policemen — that is the hospitality of watering places!

"And by the way, how about Bompard? You have n't told me whether he is coming too or not. Dangerous Bompard! If he should come I am quite capable of eloping with him on some glacier. What intellectual development might we not discover between us, as we approached the snowy peaks! I laugh, I am so delighted — and I go on inhaling, a little embarrassed, it is true, by the neighborhood of that terrible Bouchereau, who has just come in and seated himself two seats away from me.

"What an obdurate air he has, that man, to be sure! His hands crossed on the knob of his cane and chin resting on his hands, he talks away in a high voice, looking straight ahead, without really speaking to anybody. Do you suppose that I must take it as a lesson for me, what he says of the lack of prudence among the ladies who bathe, about their gowns of thin linen, about the folly of going out of doors after dinner in a country where the evenings are mortally cold? Horrid man, one would believe he is aware that I propose this evening to beg for charities at the Arvillard church in aid of the work of the propaganda! Father Olivieri is to describe from the pulpit his missionary trips into Thibet, his captivity and martyrdom, while Mlle. Bachellery will sing the 'Ave Maria' of Gounod, and I am going to have the greatest fun on our return to the hotel, marching through all the little dark streets by lantern-light, just like a regular 'retreat' with torches.

"If that is a consultation on my health which M. Bouchereau was giving me, I don't want it; it is too late. In the first place, my very dear sir! I have full permission from my little doctor, who is far more amiable than you are and has even allowed me to take a turn at a waltz in the drawing-room at the close. Oh, only a little one, of course; besides, if I dance a little too much, everybody goes for me! They do not understand that I am robust, notwithstanding a figure like a long lead-pencil and that a Parisian girl never gets ill from dancing too much. 'Look out now—

don't tire yourself too much.' This woman will bring me up my shawl, that man will close the window at my back for fear that I should catch cold; but the most interested of all is the youth with springs, because he has discovered that I have a devilish deal more springs than his sister.

" Poor girl, that would not be difficult! Between you and me, I believe that, rendered desperate by the frigidity of Alice Bachellery, this young gentleman has retired upon me and proposes to make love to me — but alas, how he loses his labor; for my heart is taken, it is all Bompard's! — O, well, after all, no, it is *not* Bompard's, and you know that too. The personage in my romance is not Bompard, it is — it is — ha, ha! so much the worse for you! my hour is up; I will tell you some other day, Miss Haughtiness! "

CHAPTER XII.

A WATERING-PLACE (*continued*).

THE morning on which the *Bathers' Gazette* announced that his Excellency, the Minister of Public Instruction, with his secretary Bompard and staff, had taken quarters in the Alpes Dauphinoises, great was the demoralization in the surrounding hotels. It just happened that La Laita had been keeping dark for two days a Catholic bishop from Geneva in order to produce him at the proper moment, as well as a Councillor-General from the Department of the Isère, a Lieutenant-Judge from Tahiti, an architect from Boston — in fact, a whole cargo; La Chevrette was on the point of receiving also a "Deputy from the Rhône and family." But the Deputy, the Lieutenant-Judge and all disappeared, lost in the illustrious mass of flame, the flame of glory, which followed Numa Roumestan everywhere!

People talked only of him, occupied themselves about him only. Any pretext was good enough to introduce oneself into the Alpes Dauphinoises in order to pass before the little drawing-room on the ground floor looking into the garden where the Minister took his meals with his ladies and his secretary; to see him taking a hand in a game of

bowls, dear to Southern Frenchmen, with Father Olivieri of the Missions, a holy man and terribly hairy, who, along of having lived among savages, had taken unto himself their manners and customs, uttering terrible cries when taking aim and brandishing the balls above his head when letting fly as if they were tomahawks.

The Minister's handsome features, the oiliness of his manners, won him all hearts, but more especially his sympathy for the poor. The day after his arrival the two waiters who served on the first floor announced at the hotel office that the Minister was going to take them to Paris for his personal servants. Now, as they were good workmen, Mme. Laugeron pulled a very wry face, but allowed nothing to be seen by his Excellency, whose presence was of such great importance and honor to her hotel. The prefect and the rector made their appearance from Grenoble in full fig to present their respects to Roumestan. The Abbot of La Grande Chartreuse — for Roumestan made a pleading on their side against the Prémontrés and their liqueur — sent him with the greatest pomp a case of extra-fine chartreuse; and finally the Prefect of Chambéry came to get his orders for the laying of the corner-stone for the new college, a good occasion for a manifesto in a speech and for a revolution in the methods at the universities.

But the Minister asked for a little rest. The labors of the session had wearied him; he wanted to have a chance to get a breath, to live quietly in the midst of his family and prepare at leisure this

Chambéry speech, which had such a considerable importance. And the prefect understood that perfectly well; he only asked to be notified forty-eight hours before in order that he might give the necessary brilliancy to the ceremony. The corner-stone had been waiting for two months and would naturally wait longer for the good-will of the illustrious orator.

As a matter of fact, what kept Roumestan at Arvillard was neither the necessity for rest nor the leisure needed by that marvellous improvisator — upon whom time and reflection had the same effect as humidity upon phosphorus — but the presence of Alice Bachellery. After five months of an impassioned flirtation, Numa had got no further with his little one than he was on the day of their first meeting. He haunted the house, enjoyed the savory bouillabaisse cooked by Mme. Bachellery, listened to the songs of the former director of the Folies Bordelaises, and repaid these slight favors with a flood of presents, bouquets, Ministerial theatre boxes, tickets to meetings of the Institute and the Chamber of Deputies, and even with the diploma of Officer of Academy for the song-writer — all this without getting his love affair one bit ahead.

Nevertheless, he was not one of those fresh hands who are ready to go fishing at every hour without having tried the water beforehand and thoroughly baited it; only he was engaged in an affair with the cleverest kind of trout, who amused herself with his precautions, now and then nibbled at the

bait and sometimes gave him the impression that she was caught; but then, all of a sudden, with one of her bounds she would skip away, leaving him with his mouth dry with longing and his heart shaken by the motions of her undulating, subtle and tempting spine.

Nothing was more enervating than this little game. Numa could have caused it to stop at any minute by giving the little girl what she demanded, namely, a nomination as prima donna at the opera, a contract for five years, large extras, allowance for fire, the right to have her name displayed — all that stipulated on paper bearing the government stamp, and not merely by a simple clasp of the hand, or by Cadaillac's "Here 's my hand on it!" She believed no more in that than she did in the expressions, "You may depend upon me for it" — "It 's just the same as if you had it" — phrases with which for the past five months Roumestan had been trying to dupe her.

Roumestan found himself between two pressing demands. "Yes," said Cadaillac, "all right — if you will renew my own lease." Now Cadaillac was used up and done with; his presence at the head of the first musical theatre was a scandal, a blot, a rotten heritage from the Imperial administration. The press would certainly raise an outcry against a gambler who had failed three times and was not allowed to wear his officer's cross, against a cynical *poseur* who dissipated the public money without any shame.

Finally, wearied out with not being able to allow

herself to be captured, Alice broke the fish-line and skipped away, carrying the fish-hook with her.

One day the Minister arrived at the Bachellery house and found it empty, except for the father, who, in order to console him, sang his last popular refrain for his benefit:

"*Donne-moi d'quoi q't'as, t'auras d'quoi qu' j'ai.*"
(Gimme a bite o' yourn, my boy, I 'll gi' you a bite o' mine.)

He forced himself to be patient for a month, and then went to see the fertile song-writer again, who was good enough to sing him his new song beginning —

"*Quand le saucisson va, tout va,*"
(Sausage gone, all is gone,) —

and let him know that the ladies, finding themselves delightfully situated at the baths, had announced their intention to double the term of their sojourn.

Then it was that Roumestan remembered that he was expected for the laying of the corner-stone of the college at Chambéry, a promise he had made off-hand and which probably would have remained off-hand if Chambéry had not been in the neighborhood of Arvillard, whither, by a providential piece of chance, Jarras, the doctor and friend of the Minister, had just sent Mlle. Le Quesnoy.

Immediately upon his arrival they met each other in the garden of the hotel. She was tremendously surprised to see him, just as if that very morning she had not read the pompous

announcement of his coming in the daily gazette, just as if for eight days past, through the thousand voices of its forests, its fountains, its innumerable echoes, the whole valley had not been announcing the arrival of his Excellency.

"What! you here?"

Roumestan, with his Ministerial air, imposing and stiff:

"I am here to see my sister-in-law."

Moreover he was surprised to find that Miss Bachellery was still at Arvillard; he had thought her gone this long while.

"Well, come now, I have got to take care of myself, have n't I? since Cadaillac pretends that my voice is so sick!"

Then she gave him a little Parisian nod with the ends of her eyelashes and waltzed off, uttering a clear roulade, a delicious undersong like the note of a blackbird, which one hears long after one loses the bird from sight.

Only from that day on she changed her manner. It was no longer the precocious child forever bouncing about the hotel, roqueting Master Paul, playing with the swing and other innocent games; it was no longer the girl who was only happy with the children, disarmed the most severe mammas and most morose ecclesiastics by the ingenuousness of her laugh and her promptness at the sacred services. In place of that appeared Alice Bachellery, the diva of the Bouffes, the pretty tomboy, lively in manners and setting the pace, who surrounded herself with young whipper-

snappers, got up impromptu festivities, picnics and suppers, whose doubtful reputation her mother, who was always present, only partly succeeded in making respectable.

Every morning a basket-wagon with a white canopy bordered with fringed curtains drew up to the front door an hour before these fine ladies came downstairs in their light-toned gowns. Meanwhile about them pranced and caracoled a jolly cavalcade consisting of everybody in the way of a free and unmarried person in the Alpes Dauphinoises and the neighboring hotels — the Assistant Justice, the American architect and more especially the young man on springs, whom the young diva seemed no longer to be driving to despair by her innocent infantilities. The carriage well-crammed with cloaks against their return, a big basket of provisions on the box, they swept through the country at a sharp rate on the road for the Chartreuse of St. Hugon. Three hours were spent on the mountain along zigzag, precipitous roads on a level with the black tops of pines that scramble down precipices toward torrents all white with foam; or else in the direction of Brame-farine, where one breakfasts on mountain cheese washed down by a little claret very lively in its nature, which makes the Alps dance before one's eyes — Mont Blanc and all that marvellous horizon of glaciers and blue peaks which one discovers up there, together with little lakes, fragments shining at the foot of the crags like so many broken pieces of sky.

Then they came down "*à la ramasse,*" seated upon sledges of branches without any backs to lean against, which made it necessary to grasp the branches frantically, launched headlong as they were down the declivities, steered by a mountaineer who goes straight ahead over the velvet of the upland pastures and the pebbly bed of dry torrents, and passing with the same swiftness a section of rock or the big gap of a river. At last it lands you down below overwhelmed, bruised and suffocated, your whole body in a quiver and your eyes rolling with the sensation of having survived a most horrible earthquake.

And the day's trip was not complete unless the entire cavalcade had been drenched on the way by one of those mountain storms, bright with lightning flashes and streaks of hail, which frighten the horses, make the landscape dramatic and prepare a sensational return. Little Bachellery would be seated on the box in some man's overcoat, the tassel of her cap decorated with a feather of the Pyrennean partridge. She would hold the reins, whip the horses hard in order to warm herself and, when once landed from the coach, recount all the dangers of the excursion with the greatest vivacity, a high sharp voice and brilliant eyes, showing the lively reaction of her youthful body against the cold downpour — all with a little shudder of fear.

It would have been well if then at least she had felt the need of a good sleep, one of those leaden slumbers which trips in the mountains produce.

Not at all; till early morning, in the rooms of these women, there were goings on without end —laughter, songs, popping bottles, meals brought up at improper hours, card-tables pushed around for baccarat—and all this over the head of the Minister, whose room happened to be just underneath.

Several times he complained of it to Mme. Laugeron, who was very much torn between her desire to be agreeable to his Excellency and fear of causing clients with such good paying qualities discontent. And besides, has any one the right to be very exacting in these hotels at the baths which are always being turned upside down by departures and arrivals in the midst of the night, by trunks that are dragged about, by big boots and iron-bound Alpine sticks of mountain climbers, who are engaged in making ready for the ascent long before daybreak? And then, besides, the fits of coughing of the sick people, those horrible, incessant coughs which seem to tear people in spasms, appearing to combine the elements of a sob, a death rattle and the crowing of a husky cock.

These giddy nights, heavy July nights, which Roumestan passed turning and twisting on his bed, filled with pressing thoughts, while upstairs sounded clear in the night the laughter of his neighbors, broken by single notes and snatches of song—these nights he might have employed writing his speech for Chambéry; but he was too much agitated and too angry. He had to control

himself not to run upstairs to the next floor and drive off at the tips of his boots the young man on springs, the American and that shameless Assistant Justice, that dishonor to French jurisprudence in the colonies, so as to be able to seize that naughty little scoundrel by the neck, by her turtle-dove's neck puffed out with roulades, and at the same time say to her just once for all:

"Is n't it about time that you ceased making me suffer in this way?"

In order to quiet himself and drive off these dreams and other visions even more vivid and painful he lit his candle again, called to Bompard, asleep in the adjoining room — his comrade, his echo, always ready at command — and then the two would talk about the girl. It was for that very purpose he had brought him along, having torn him away with no little trouble from the business of establishing his artificial hatcher. Bompard consoled himself by talking of his venture to Father Olivieri, who was thoroughly acquainted with the raising of ostriches, having lived at Cape Town a long while. The tales told by the priest interested the imaginative Bompard very much more than Numa's affair with little Bachellery — the Father's voyages, his martyrdom, the different ways in which the robust body of the man had been tortured in different countries — that buccaneer's body burnt and sawed and stretched on the wheel, a sort of sample card of refinements in human cruelty — and all that along with the cool fan of silky and tickly ostrich plumes dreamt

of by the promoter. But Bompard was so well trained to his business of shadow that even at that time of night Numa found him ready to warm up and be indignant in sympathy with him and to express, with his magnificent head under the silken ends of a night scarf, the emotions of anger, irony or sorrow, according as the talk fell upon the false eyelashes of the artificial little girl, on her sixteen years, which certainly were equal to twenty-four, or on the immorality of a mother who could take part in such scandalous orgies. Finally, when Roumestan, having declaimed and gesticulated well and laid bare the weakness of his amorous heart, put out his candle, saying "Let's try to sleep, come on," then Bompard would use the advantage of the darkness to say to him before going to bed:

"Well, in your place, I know well enough what I would do."

"What?"

"I would renew the contract with Cadaillac."

"Never!"

And then he would plunge violently under the bed-clothes in order to protect himself from the rowdy-dow overhead.

One afternoon at the time for music, that hour during life at the baths which is given over to coquetry and gossip, whilst all the bathers, crowded in front of the establishment as if on the poop of a ship, came and went, slowly circled about, or took their seats on the camp-chairs arranged in three rows, the Minister had darted into an empty

alley in order to avoid Mlle. Bachellery, whom he saw coming clad in a stunning toilet of blue and red, escorted by her staff. There, all alone, seated in the corner of a bench and with his pre-occupation strong upon him, infected by the melancholy of the hour and that distant music, he was mechanically stirring about with his umbrella the spots of fire with which the alley was strewn by the setting sun, when a slow shade passing across his sunlight made him raise his eyes. It was Bouchereau, the celebrated doctor, very pale and puffy, dragging his feet after him. They knew each other in the way that all Parisians at a certain height of society know each other. It chanced that Bouchereau, who had not been out for several days, felt in a sociable frame of mind; he took a seat; they fell to talking: "Is it true that you are ill, Doctor?"

"Very ill," said the other with his manner of a wild boar, "a hereditary disease — a hypertrophy of the heart. My mother died of it and my sisters also. Only, I shall last less long than they, because of my horrible business; I have about a year to live — or two years at the most."

There was nothing except useless phrases with which to answer this great scientist, this infallible diagnoser who was talking of his death with such quiet assurance. Roumestan understood it, as in silence he pondered that there indeed were sorrows a good deal more serious than his own. Bouchereau went on without looking at him, having that vague eye and that relentless sequence of

ideas which the habit of the professorial chair and his lectures give to a professor:

"We physicians, you see, are supposed not to feel anything because we have such an air with us. They think that in the sick person we are taking care of the sickness only, never the being, the human creature suffering pain. What an error! I have seen my master Dupuytren, who was supposed to be a pretty tough chicken, weeping hot tears before a poor little sufferer from diphtheria who told him very quietly that it was an awful bore to die . . . and then those heart-breaking appeals from anguished mothers, those passionate hands which clasp your arm: 'My child, save my child!' . . . and then the fathers who stiffen themselves up and say to you in a very masculine voice, but with great big tears running down their cheeks: 'You will pull him through, won't you, Doctor?' It is all very well to harden oneself, but such despairs break your heart, and that is a nice thing, is n't it, when one's own heart is already attacked? Forty years of practice and every day becoming more nervous and sensitive — it is my patients who have killed me! I am dying from the sufferings of other people!"

"But I thought you did not accept patients any more, Doctor," said the Minister, who was deeply moved.

"Oh, no; never any more, for nobody's sake! I might see a man fall dead to the ground there in front of me and I would n't even bend down. You understand? It is enough to turn one's blood

at last, this sickness of mine, which I have increased by all the sicknesses of others! Why, I want to live; there is nothing else but life!"

With all his pallor he excited himself and his nostrils, pinched with a look of morbidness, drank in the light air filled with lukewarm aromas, vibrating musical instruments and cries of birds. He continued with a heart-broken sigh:

"I do not practise any more, but I always remain the doctor. I preserve that fatal gift of diagnosis, that horrible second sight for the latent symptom, for suffering which the sufferer hopes to conceal, and which at a mere glance at the passer-by I perceive in the person who walks and talks and acts in the full force of his being, showing me the man about to die to-morrow, the motionless corpse. And all that just as clearly as I see *it* advancing towards me, the fit which is going to do for me, that last fainting-fit from which nothing can ever bring me back."

"It is frightful!" murmured Numa, who felt himself turning pale. A poltroon in the face of sickness and death, like all Provençal people, those people so crazy to live, he turned his face away from the redoubtable scientist and did not dare look him in the face for fear he might read on his own rubicund features the warning signs of his, Numa's, approaching end.

"Oh! this terrible skill at diagnosis, which they all envy me, how sad it makes me, how it ruins the little remnant of life which remains to me! Why, look here: I know a luckless woman here whose

son died of laryngeal consumption ten or twelve years ago. I had seen him twice and I alone among all the physicians gave warning of the seriousness of the malady. Well, to-day I come across that same mother with her young daughter; and I may say that the presence of those unfortunate ones destroys the good of my sojourn at the baths and does me more harm than my treatment will ever do me good. They pursue me, they wish to consult me, and as for me I absolutely refuse to do it. No good of auscultating that child in order to read her condemnation! It was enough the other day to have seen her voracity while seizing a bowl of raspberries, and during the inhalation to have seen her hand lying on her knees, a thin hand, the nails of which are puffed up and rise above the fingers as if they were ready to detach themselves. That girl has the consumption her brother had; she will die before the year is out. But let other people tell them that; I have given enough of those dagger-stabs which have turned again to stab me. I want no more."

Roumestan had got up, very much frightened.

"Do you know the name of those ladies, Doctor?"

"No; they sent me their card and I would not even see them. I only know that they are at our hotel."

And all of a sudden, looking down the alley, he cried:

"By George, there they are! — I am off—"

Away down there at the end of the alley, on the little gravelled circle whence the band was sending its last note, there was a movement of umbrellas and light-colored gowns among the foliage, just as the first strokes of the dinner bells were heard from the hotels. The ladies Le Quesnoy detached themselves from a group of lively, chatting people, Hortense tall and slender in the sunlight, in a toilet of muslin and valenciennes, a hat trimmed with roses and in her hand a bouquet of the same kind of rose bought in the park.

"With whom were you talking just now, Numa? We thought it was Dr. Bouchereau."

There she was before him, dazzling in her youth and so brilliant, on that happy day, that her mother herself began to lose her fears and allowed a little of that infectious gayety to be reflected on her ancient face.

"Yes, it was Bouchereau, who was recounting to me his miseries; he's pretty low, poor fellow!"

And Numa, looking at her, reassured himself.

"The man is crazy; it is not possible; it's his own death he is dragging about with him and prognosticates everywhere."

At that moment Bompard appeared, walking very quickly and brandishing a newspaper.

"What is up?" asked the Minister.

"Great news! The tabor-player has made his début —"

They heard Hortense murmur: "At last!" and Numa was radiant.

"Success, was it not?"

"Do you think so? I have not read the article; but here are three columns on the front sheet of the *Messenger!*"

"There 's one more whom I discovered!" said the Minister, who had seated himself again with his thumbs in the armholes of his waist-coat. "Come on, read it to us."

Mme. Le Quesnoy having called attention to the fact that the dinner-bell had sounded, Hortense hastily answered that it was only the first bell, and, her cheek resting on her hand, she listened in a pretty attitude of smiling expectancy. Bompard read:

"Is it due to the Minister of the Fine Arts or to the Director of the Opera that the Parisian public suffered such a grotesque mystification as that with which it was victimized last night? —"

They all started, with the exception of Bompard, who, under the impetus of his gait as a fine reader, lulled by the sonorous sound of his own voice and without taking in what he was reading, looked from one to the other, surprised at their astonishment.

"Well," said Numa, "go on, go on!"

"In any case, it is the Honorable Roumestan who must shoulder the responsibility. He it is who has lugged up from his province this savage and odd-looking piper, this goat-whistler —"

"Well, there certainly are some people who are very mean," interrupted the young girl, who had turned quite pale under her roses. The reader continued, with eyes staring in horror at the dreadful things he saw coming:

"— this goat whistler; to him is due that our Academy of Music appeared for the space of an evening like the return from the fair at Saint Cloud. In truth it would take a very crack fifer indeed to believe that Paris —"

The Minister rudely dragged the newspaper from his hand.

"I hope you don't intend to read us that idiocy to the bitter end, do you? it is quite enough to have brought it to us at all."

He ran down the article with his eye, with one of those quick glances of the public man who is used to reading the invectives of the daily press. "A provincial Minister — a pretty clog-dancer — Valmajour's own Roumestan — hissed the Ministry and smashed his tabor —"

He had enough of it, thrust the virulent paper down into the bottom of his pocket, then rose, puffing with the rage that swelled his face, and taking Mme. Le Quesnoy by the arm:

"Come, let 's go to dinner, Mamma — this should teach me not to fret myself for the sake of a parcel of nobodies."

All four marched along together, Hortense with her eyes upon the ground in a state of consternation.

"This is a matter concerning an artist of great talent," said she, trying to strengthen her voice, a little veiled in its tone. "One ought not to hold him responsible for the injustice done him by the public nor for the irony of the newspapers."

Roumestan came to a dead stop.

"Talent — talent! — *bé*, yes — I don't deny that — but much too exotic — " and, raising his umbrella:

"Let us beware of the South, little sister, let's beware of the South — don't work it too hard — Paris will grow weary."

And he resumed his walk with measured steps, quiet and cool as if he were a citizen of Copenhagen. The silence was unbroken save for the crackling of the gravel under his feet, which in certain circumstances seems to indicate the crushing or crumbling effect of a fit of rage or of a dream.

When they reached the front of the hotel, from the ten windows of whose enormous dining-room there came the noise of hungry spoons clattering on bottoms of plates, Hortense stopped, and, raising her head:

"So then, this poor boy — you 're going to abandon him ?"

"What is to be done? — there is no use fighting against it — since Paris does n't care for him."

She gave him an indignant glance which was almost one of disdain.

"Oh, it is horrible, what you are saying; well, as for me, I am prouder than you are; I am true to my enthusiasms!"

She crossed the porch of the hotel with two skips.

"Hortense, the second bell has sounded!"

"Yes, yes, I know — I am coming down."

She ran up to her room and locked the door in

order not to be interfered with. Opening her desk, one of those natty trifles by the aid of which a Parisian woman can make personal to herself even the chamber of an inn, she pulled out one of the photographs of herself which she had had taken in the head-dress and scarf of an Arles woman, wrote a line underneath it and affixed her name. Whilst she was putting on the address the bell in the tower of Arvillard sounded the hour across the sombre violet that filled the valley, as if to give solemnity to what she had dared to do.

"Six o'clock."

From the torrent the mist was rising in wandering and flaky masses of white. In the amphitheatre of forests and mountains and the silver plume of the glacier, in the rose-colored evening, she took note of the smallest details of that silent and reposeful moment, just as on the calendar one marks some single date among all others; just as in a book one underscores a passage which has caused one emotion; dreaming aloud she said:

"It is my life, my entire life I am risking at this moment."

She took as witness the solemnity of the evening, the majesty of nature, the tremendous repose of everything about her.

Her entire life that she was engaging? Poor little girl! if she had only known how little that was!

A few days after this the Le Quesnoy ladies left the hotel, Hortense's treatment having ended.

Although reassured by the healthy look of her child and by what the little doctor said concerning the miracle performed by the nymph of the waters, her mother was only too glad to have done with that life, which in its smallest details recalled to her a past martyrdom.

"And how about you, Numa?"

O, as for him, he intended to stay a week or two longer, finish a bit of medical treatment and take advantage of the quiet which their departure would afford him in order to write that famous speech. It would make a tremendous row, the news of which they would get at Paris. By George! Le Quesnoy would not like it much!

Then all of a sudden, Hortense, though ready to leave, and notwithstanding she was happy at returning home to see the beloved absent ones whom distance made even more dear to her — for her imagination reached even to her heart — Hortense suddenly felt sorrow at leaving this beautiful country and all the hotel society and her friends of three weeks, to whom she had no idea she had become so much attached. Ah, ye loving natures! how you give yourselves out! how everything grasps you and then what pain ensues when breaking these invisible yet sensitive threads!

People had been so kind to her, so full of attention; and at the last hour so many outstretched hands pressed about the carriage, so many tender expressions! Young girls would kiss her: "We shall have no more fun without you." Then they promised to write to each other and ex-

changed mementos, sweet-smelling boxes and paper-cutters made of mother-of-pearl with this inscription in a shimmering blue like the lakes: "Arvillard, 1876." And while M. Laugeron slipped a bottle of superfine Chartreuse into her travelling-sack, she saw, up there behind the pane of her chamber window, the mountaineer's wife who had been her servant dabbing her eyes with an enormous handkerchief of the color of wine-lees and heard a husky voice murmur in her ear: "Plenty of spring, my dear young lady, always plenty of spring!" It was her friend the consumptive, who, having jumped up on the wheel, poured out upon her a look of good-bye from two haggard and feverish eyes, but eyes sparkling with energy, will and a bit of emotion besides. O, what kind people! what kind people! . . .

Hortense could not speak for fear of crying.

"Good-bye, good-bye, all!"

The Minister accompanied the ladies as far as the distant railway station and took his seat in front of them. Crack goes the whip, jingle go the bells! All of a sudden Hortense cries out:

"Oh, my umbrella!" She had had it in her hand not a moment before. Twenty people rush off to find it: "The umbrella, the umbrella"—not in the bedroom, not in the drawing-room; doors slam; the hotel is searched from top to bottom.

"Don't look for it; I know where it is."

Always lively, the young girl jumps out of the carriage and runs to the garden, toward the grove

of walnuts, where even that morning she had been adding several chapters to the romance that was being written in her crazy little head. There lay the umbrella, thrown across the bench, a bit of herself left in that favorite spot, something which was very like her. What delicious hours had been passed in this nook of rich verdure! what confidences had gone off on the wings of the bees and butterflies! Without a doubt she would never return thither again. This thought caused her heart to contract and kept her there. At that moment she found everything charming, even the long grinding sound of the swing.

"Get out! you make me weary—"

It was the voice of Mlle. Bachellery who was furious at being left because of this departure and, believing herself alone with her mother, was talking to her in her habitual tongue. Hortense thought of the filial flatteries which had so often jarred upon her nerves and laughed to herself while returning to the carriage. Then, at the turn of an alley, she found herself face to face with Bouchereau. She stepped aside, but he laid hold of her arm.

"So you are going to leave us, my child?"

"Why, yes, sir."

She hardly knew what to answer, startled by this meeting and surprised because it was the first time that he had ever spoken to her. Then he took her two hands in his own and held her that way in front of him, his arms wide apart, and gazed upon her fixedly from his piercing eyes under

their brushy white brows. Then his lips and hands, his whole body trembled, while a rush of blood colored deeply his pallid face.

"Well, then, good-bye, happy journey!" And without another word he drew her to him and pressed her to his breast with the tenderness of a grandfather and then hastened away with both hands pressed against his heart, which seemed about to break.

END OF VOL. I.

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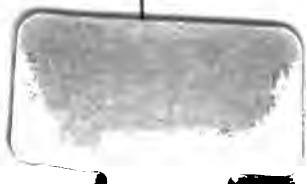
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